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HEART AND SCIENCE

I.

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HEART AND SCIENCE

A STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME

BY

WILKIE COLLINS



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1883

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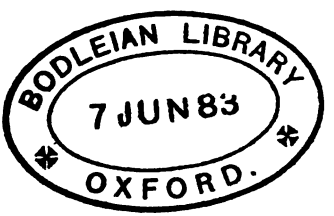
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PREFACE.

I.

TO READERS IN GENERAL.

You are the children of Old Mother England, on both sides of the Atlantic; you form the majority of buyers and borrowers of novels; and you judge of works of fiction by certain inbred preferences, which but slightly influence the other great public of readers on the continent of Europe.

The two qualities in fiction which hold the highest rank in your estimation are: Character and Humour. Incident and dramatic situation only occupy the second place in your favour. A novel that tells no story, or that blunders

perpetually in trying to tell a story—a novel so entirely devoid of all sense of the dramatic side of human life, that not even a theatrical thief can find anything in it to steal—will nevertheless be a work that wins (and keeps) your admiration, if it has humour which dwells on your memory, and characters which enlarge the circle of your friends.

I have myself always tried to combine the different merits of a good novel, in one and the same work; and I have never succeeded in keeping an equal balance. In the present story you will find the scales inclining, on the whole, in favour of character and humour. This has not happened accidentally.

Advancing years, and health that stands sadly in need of improvement, warn me—if I am to vary my way of work—that I may have little time to lose. Without waiting for future opportunities, I have kept your standard of merit more constantly before my mind, in

writing this book, than on some former occasions.

Still persisting in telling you a story—still refusing to get up in the pulpit and preach, or to invade the platform and lecture, or to take you by the buttonhole in confidence and make fun of my Art—it has been my chief effort to draw the characters with a vigour and breadth of treatment, derived from the nearest and truest view that I could get of the one model, Nature. Whether I shall at once succeed in adding to the circle of your friends in the world of fiction—or whether you will hurry through the narrative, and only discover on a later reading that it is the characters which have interested you in the story—remains to be seen. Either way, your sympathy will find me grateful; for, either way, my motive has been to please you.

During its periodical publication correspondents, noting certain passages in 'Heart and

Science,' inquired how I came to think of writing this book. The question may be readily answered in better words than mine. My book has been written in harmony with opinions which have an indisputable claim to respect. Let them speak for themselves.

SHAKESPEARE'S OPINION.—'It was always yet the trick of our English nation, if they have a good thing, to make it too common.' (*King Henry IV., Part II.*)

WALTER SCOTT'S OPINION.—'I am no great believer in the extreme degree of improvement to be derived from the advancement of Science; for every study of that nature tends, when pushed to a certain extent, to harden the heart.' (*Letter to Miss Edgeworth.*)

FARADAY'S OPINION.—'The education of the judgment has for its first and its last step—Humility.' (*Lecture on Mental Education, at the Royal Institution.*)

Having given my reasons for writing the book, let me conclude by telling you what I have kept out of the book.

It encourages me to think that we have many sympathies in common; and among them, that most of us have taken to our hearts domestic pets. Writing under this conviction, I have not forgotten my responsibility towards you, and towards my Art, in pleading the cause of the harmless and affectionate beings of God's creation. From first to last, you are purposely left in ignorance of the hideous secrets of Vivisection. The outside of the laboratory is a necessary object in my landscape—but I never once open the door and invite you to look in. I trace, in one of my characters, the result of the habitual practice of cruelty (no matter under what pretence) in fatally deteriorating the nature of man—and I leave the picture to speak for itself. My own personal feeling has throughout been held in check. Thankfully

accepting the assistance rendered to me by Miss Frances Power Cobbe, by Mrs. H. M. Gordon, and by Surgeon-General Gordon, C.B., I have borne in mind (as they have borne in mind) the value of temperate advocacy to a good cause.

With this, your servant withdraws, and leaves you to the story.

II.

TO READERS IN PARTICULAR.

If you are numbered among those good friends of ours, who are especially capable of understanding us and sympathising with us, be pleased to accept the expression of our gratitude, and to pass over the lines that follow.

But if you open our books with a mind soured by distrust; if you habitually anticipate inexcusable ignorance where the course of the story happens to turn on matters of fact; it is you, Sir or Madam, whom I now want. Not to dispute with you—far from it! I own with

sorrow that your severity does occasionally encounter us on assailable ground. But there are exceptions, even to the stiffest rules. Some of us are not guilty of wilful carelessness: some of us apply to competent authority, when we write on subjects beyond the range of our own experience. Having thus far ventured to speak for my colleagues, you will conclude that I am paving the way for speaking next of myself. As our cousins in the United States say—that is so.

In the following pages, there are allusions to medical practice at the bedside; leading in due course to physiological questions which connect themselves with the main interest of the novel. In traversing this delicate ground, you have not been forgotten. Before the manuscript went to the printer, it was submitted for correction to an eminent London surgeon, whose experience extends over a period of forty years.

Again: a supposed discovery in connection with brain disease, which occupies a place of importance, is not (as you may suspect) the fantastic product of the author's imagination. Finding his materials everywhere, he has even contrived to make use of Professor Ferrier—writing on the 'Localisation of Cerebral Disease,' and closing a confession of the present result of post-mortem examination of brains in these words: 'We cannot even be sure, whether many of the changes discovered are the cause or the result of the Disease, or whether the two are the conjoint results of a common cause.' Plenty of elbow room here for the spirit of discovery.

On becoming acquainted with 'Mrs. Gallilee,' you will find her talking—and you will sometimes even find the author talking—of scientific subjects in general. You will naturally conclude that it is 'all gross caricature.' No; it is all promiscuous reading. Let me spare you a

long list of books consulted, and of newspapers and magazines mutilated for 'cuttings'—and appeal to examples once more, and for the last time.

When 'Mrs. Gallilee' wonders whether 'Carmina has ever heard of the Diathermancy of Ebonite,' she is thinking of proceedings at a conversazione in honour of Professor Helmholtz (reported in the 'Times' of April 12, 1881), at which 'radiant energy' was indeed converted into 'sonorous vibrations.' Again: when she contemplates taking part in a discussion on Matter, she has been slily looking into Chambers's Encyclopædia, and has there discovered the interesting conditions on which she can 'dispense with the idea of atoms.' Briefly, not a word of my own invention occurs, when Mrs. Gallilee turns the learned side of her character to your worships' view.

I have now only to add that the story has been subjected to careful revision, and I hope

to consequent improvement, in its present form of publication. Past experience has shown me that you have a sharp eye for slips of the pen, and that you thoroughly enjoy convicting a novelist, by post, of having made a mistake. Whatever pains I may have taken to disappoint you, it is quite likely that we may be again indebted to each other on this occasion. So, to our infinite relief on either side, we part friends after all.

W. C.

LONDON: *April* 1883.

HEART AND SCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE weary old nineteenth century had advanced into the last twenty years of its life.

Towards two o'clock in the afternoon, Ovid Vere (of the Royal College of Surgeons) stood at the window of his consulting-room in London, looking out at the summer sunshine, and the quiet dusty street.

He had received a warning, familiar to the busy men of our time—the warning from overwrought Nature, which counsels rest after excessive work. With a prosperous career before him, he had been compelled (at only thirty-one

years of age) to ask a colleague to take charge of his practice, and to give the brain which he had cruelly wearied a rest of some months to come. On the next day he had arranged to embark for the Mediterranean in a friend's yacht.

An active man, devoted heart and soul to his profession, is not a man who can learn the happy knack of being idle at a moment's notice. Ovid found the mere act of looking out of window, and wondering what he should do next, more than he had patience to endure.

He turned to his study table. If he had possessed a wife to look after him, he would have been reminded that he and his study table had nothing in common, under present circumstances. Being deprived of conjugal superintendence, he broke through his own rules. His restless hand unlocked a drawer, and took out a manuscript work on medicine of his own

writing. 'Surely,' he thought, 'I may finish a chapter, before I go to sea to-morrow?'

His head, steady enough while he was only looking out of window, began to swim before he had got to the bottom of a page. The last sentences of the unfinished chapter alluded to a matter of fact which he had not yet verified. In emergencies of any sort, he was a patient man and a man of resource. The necessary verification could be accomplished by a visit to the College of Surgeons, situated in the great square called Lincoln's Inn Fields. Here was a motive for a walk—with an occupation at the end of it, which only involved a question to a Curator, and an examination of a Specimen He locked up his manuscript, and set forth for Lincoln's Inn Fields.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN two friends happen to meet in the street, do they ever look back along the procession of small circumstances which has led them both, from the starting-point of their own houses, to the same spot, at the same time? Not one man in ten thousand has probably ever thought of making such a fantastic inquiry as this. And consequently not one man in ten thousand, living in the midst of reality, has discovered that he is also living in the midst of romance.

From the moment when the young surgeon closed the door of his house, he was walking blindfold on his way to a patient in the future who was personally still a stranger to him. He

never reached the College of Surgeons. He never embarked on his friend's yacht.

What were the obstacles which turned him aside from the course that he had in view? Nothing but a series of trivial circumstances, occurring in the experience of a man who goes out for a walk.

He had only reached the next street, when the first of the circumstances presented itself in the shape of a friend's carriage, which drew up at his side. A bright benevolent face, encircled by bushy white whiskers, looked out of the window, and a hearty voice asked him if he had completed his arrangements for a long holiday. Having replied to this, Ovid had a question to put, on his side.

'How is our patient, Sir Richard?'

'Out of danger.'

'And what do the other doctors say now?'

Sir Richard laughed: 'They say it's my luck.'

'Not convinced yet?'

'Not in the least. Who has ever succeeded in convincing fools? Let's try another subject. Is your mother reconciled to your new plans?'

'I can hardly tell you. My mother is in a state of indescribable agitation. Her brother's Will has been found in Italy. And his daughter may arrive in England at a moment's notice.'

'Unmarried?' Sir Richard asked slyly.

'I don't know.'

'Any money?'

Ovid smiled—not cheerfully. 'Do you think my poor mother would be in a state of indescribable agitation if there was *not* money?'

Sir Richard was one of those obsolete elderly persons who quote Shakspeare. 'Ah, well,' he said, 'your mother is like Kent in King Lear—she's too old to learn. Is she as fond as ever of lace? and as keen as ever after a bargain?' He handed a card out of the

carriage window. 'I have just seen an old patient of mine,' he resumed, 'in whom I feel a friendly interest. She is retiring from business by my advice; and she asks me, of all the people in the world, to help her in getting rid of some wonderful 'remnants,' at 'an alarming sacrifice!' My kind regards to your mother—and there's a chance for her. One last word, Ovid. Don't be in too great a hurry to return to work; you have plenty of spare time before you. Look at my wise dog here, on the front seat, and learn from him to be idle and happy.'

The great physician had another companion, besides his dog. A friend, bound his way, had accepted a seat in the carriage. 'Who is that handsome young man?' the friend asked as they drove away.

'He is the only son of a relative of mine, dead many years since,' Sir Richard replied. 'Don't forget that you have seen him.'

'May I ask why?'

'He has not yet reached the prime of life; and he is on the way—already far on the way—to be one of the foremost men of his time. With a private fortune, he has worked as few surgeons work who have their bread to get by their profession. The money comes from his late father. His mother has married again. The second husband is a lazy, harmless old fellow, named Gallilee; possessed of one small attraction—fifty thousand pounds, grubbed up in trade. There are two little daughters, by the second marriage. With such a stepfather as I have described, and, between ourselves, with a mother who has rather more than her fair share of the jealous, envious, and money-loving propensities of humanity, my friend Ovid is not diverted by family influences from the close pursuit of his profession. You will tell me, he may marry. Well! if he gets a good wife she will be a circumstance in his

favour. But, so far as I know, he is not that sort of man. Cooler, a deal cooler, with women than I am—though I am old enough to be his father. Let us get back to his professional prospects. You heard him ask me about a patient?'

'Yes.'

'Very good. Death was knocking hard at that patient's door, when I called Ovid into consultation with myself and with two other doctors who differed with me. It was one of the very rare cases in which the old practice of bleeding was, to my mind, the only treatment to pursue. I never told him that this was the point in dispute between me and the other men—and they said nothing, on their side, at my express request. He took his time to examine and think; and he saw the chance of saving the patient by venturing on the use of the lancet as plainly as I did—with my forty years' experience to teach me? A young man

with that capacity for discovering the remote cause of disease, and with that superiority to the trammels of routine in applying the treatment, has no common medical career before him. His holiday will set his health right in next to no time. I see nothing in his way, at present—not even a woman! But,' said Sir Richard, with the explanatory wink of one eye peculiar (like quotation from Shakspeare) to persons of the obsolete old time, '*we* know better than to forecast the weather if a petticoat influence appears on the horizon. One prediction, however, I do risk. If his mother buys any of that lace—I know who will get the best of the bargain!'

The conditions under which the old doctor was willing to assume the character of a prophet never occurred. Ovid remembered that he was going away on a long voyage—and Ovid was a good son. He bought some of the lace, as a present to his mother at part-

ing; and, most assuredly, he got the worst of the bargain.

His shortest way back to the straight course, from which he had deviated in making his purchase, led him into a by-street, near the flower and fruit market of Covent Garden. Here he met with the second in number of the circumstances which attended his walk. He found himself encountered by an intolerably filthy smell.

The market was not out of the direct way to Lincoln's Inn Fields. He fled from the smell to the flowery and fruity perfumes of Covent Garden, and completed the disinfecting process by means of a basket of strawberries.

Why did a poor ragged little girl, carrying a big baby, look with such longing eyes at the delicious fruit, that, as a kind-hearted man, he had no alternative but to make her a present of the strawberries? Why did two dirty boy-friends of hers appear immediately afterwards

with news of Punch in a neighbouring street, and lead the little girl away with them? Why did these two new circumstances inspire him with a fear that the boys might take the strawberries away from the poor child, burdened as she was with a baby almost as big as herself? When we suffer from overwrought nerves we are easily disturbed by small misgivings. The idle man of wearied mind followed the friends of the street drama to see what happened, forgetful of the College of Surgeons, and finding a new fund of amusement in himself.

Arrived in the neighbouring street, he discovered that the Punch performance had come to an end—like some other dramatic performances of higher pretensions—for want of a paying audience. He waited at a certain distance, watching the children. His doubts had done them an injustice. The boys only said, 'Give us a taste.' And the liberal little

girl rewarded their good conduct. An equitable and friendly division of the strawberries was made in a quiet corner.

Where—always excepting the case of a miser or a millionaire—is the man to be found who could have returned to the pursuit of his own affairs, under these circumstances, without encouraging the practice of the social virtues by a present of a few pennies? Ovid was not that man.

Putting back in his breast-pocket the bag in which he was accustomed to carry small coins for small charities, his hand touched something which felt like the envelope of a letter. He took it out—looked at it with an expression of annoyance and surprise—and once more turned aside from the direct way to Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The envelope contained his last prescription. Having occasion to consult the 'Pharmacopœia, he had written it at home, and had promised

to send it to the patient immediately. In the absorbing interest of making his preparations for leaving England, it had remained forgotten in his pocket for nearly two days. The one means of setting this unlucky error right, without further delay, was to deliver his prescription himself, and to break through his own rules for the second time by attending to a case of illness—purely as an act of atonement.

The patient lived in a house nearly opposite to the British Museum. In this northward direction he now set his face.

He made his apologies, and gave his advice —and, getting out again into the street, tried once more to shape his course for the College of Surgeons. Passing the walled garden of the British Museum, he looked towards it—and paused. What had stopped him, this time? Nothing but a tree, fluttering its bright leaves in the faint summer air.

A marked change showed itself in his face.

The moment before he had been passing in review the curious little interruptions which had attended his walk, and had wondered humorously what would happen next. Two women, meeting him, and seeing a smile on his lips, had said to each other, 'There goes a happy man.' If they had encountered him now, they might have reversed their opinion. They would have seen a man thinking of something once dear to him, in the far and unforgotten past.

He crossed over the road to the side-street which faced the garden. His head drooped; he moved mechanically. Arrived in the street, he lifted his eyes, and stood (within nearer view of it) looking at the tree.

Hundreds of miles away from London, under another tree of that gentle family, this man—so cold to women in after life—had made child-love, in the days of his boyhood, to

a sweet little cousin long since numbered with the dead. The present time, with its interests and anxieties, passed away like the passing of a dream. Little by little, as the minutes followed each other, his sore heart felt a calming influence, breathed mysteriously from those fluttering leaves. Still forgetful of the outward world, he wandered slowly up the street; living in the old scenes; thinking, not unhappily now, the old thoughts.

Where, in all London, could he have found a solitude more congenial to a dreamer in daylight?

The broad district, stretching northward and eastward from the British Museum, is like the quiet quarter of a country town set in the midst of the roaring activities of the largest city in the world. Here, you can cross the road, without putting limb or life in peril. Here, when you are idle, you can saunter and look about, safe from collision with merciless

straight-walkers whose time is money, and whose destiny is business. Here, you may meet undisturbed cats on the pavement, in the full glare of noontide, and may watch, through the railings of the squares, children at play on grass that almost glows with the lustre of the Sussex Downs. This haven of rest is alike out of the way of fashion and business; and is yet within easy reach of the one and the other. Ovid paused in a vast and silent square. If his little cousin had lived, he might perhaps have seen his children at play in some such secluded place as this.

The birds were singing blithely in the trees. A tradesman's boy, delivering fish to the cook, and two girls watering flowers at a window, were the only living creatures near him, as he roused himself and looked around.

Where was the College? Where were the Curator and the Specimen? Those questions brought with them no feeling of anxiety or

surprise. He turned, in a half-awakened way, without a wish or a purpose—turned, and listlessly looked back.

Two foot-passengers, dressed in mourning garments, were rapidly approaching him. One of them, as they came nearer, proved to be an aged woman. The other was a girl.

He drew aside to let them pass. They looked at him with the lukewarm curiosity of strangers, as they went by. The girl's eyes and his met. Only the glance of an instant—and its influence held him for life.

She went swiftly on, as little impressed by the chance meeting as the old woman at her side. Without stopping to think — without being capable of thought—Ovid followed them. Never before had he done what he was doing now; he was, literally, out of himself. He saw them ahead of him, and he saw nothing else.

Towards the middle of the square, they

turned aside into a street on the left. A concert-hall was in the street — with doors open for an afternoon performance. They entered the hall. Still out of himself, Ovid followed them.

CHAPTER III.

A ROOM of magnificent size; furnished with every conventional luxury that money can buy; lavishly provided with newspapers and books of reference; lighted by tall windows in the day-time, and by gorgeous chandeliers at night, may be nevertheless one of the dreariest places of rest and shelter that can be found on the civilised earth. Such places exist, by hundreds, in those hotels of monstrous proportions and pretensions, which now engulph the traveller who ends his journey on the pier or the platform. It may be that we feel ourselves to be strangers among strangers—it may be that there is something innately repellent in splendid carpets and curtains, chairs and tables, which have no social associations to recommend

them—it may be that the mind loses its elasticity under the inevitable restraint on friendly communication, which expresses itself in lowered tones and instinctive distrust of our next neighbour; but this alone is certain: life, in the public drawing-room of a great hotel, is life with all its healthiest emanations perishing in an exhausted receiver.

On the same day, and nearly at the same hour, when Ovid had left his house, two women sat in a corner of the public room, in one of the largest of the railway hotels latterly built in London.

Without observing it themselves, they were objects of curiosity to their fellow-travellers. They spoke to each other in a foreign language. They were dressed in deep mourning—with an absence of fashion and a simplicity of material which attracted the notice of every other woman in the room. One of them wore a black veil over her gray hair. Her hands

were brown, and knotty at the joints; her eyes looked unnaturally bright for her age; innumerable wrinkles crossed and re-crossed her skinny face; and her aquiline nose (as one of the ladies present took occasion to remark) was so disastrously like the nose of the great Duke of Wellington as to be an offensive feature in the face of a woman.

The lady's companion, being a man, took a more merciful view. 'She can't help being ugly,' he whispered. 'But see how she looks at the girl with her. A good old creature, I say, if ever there was one yet.' The lady eyed him, as only a jealous woman can eye her husband, and whispered back, 'Of course you're in love with that slip of a girl!'

She *was* a slip of a girl—and not even a tall slip. At seventeen years of age, it was doubtful whether she would ever grow to a better height.

But a girl who is too thin, and not even

so tall as the Venus de' Medici, may still be possessed of personal attractions. It was not altogether a matter of certainty, in this case, that the attractions were sufficiently remarkable to excite general admiration. The fine colour and the plump healthy cheeks, the broad smile, the regular teeth, the well-developed mouth, and the promising bosom, which form altogether the average type of beauty found in the purely bred English maiden, were not among the noticeable charms of the small creature in gloomy black, shrinking into a corner of the big room. She had very little colour of any sort to boast of. Her hair was of so light a brown that it just escaped being flaxen; but it had the negative merit of not being forced down to her eyebrows, and twisted into the hideous curly-wig which exhibits a liberal equality of ugliness on the heads of women in the present day. There was a delicacy of finish in her features—in the nose and the lips

especially—a sensitive changefulness in the expression of her eyes (too dark in themselves to be quite in harmony with her light hair), and a subtle yet simple witchery in her rare smile, which atoned, in some degree at least, for want of complexion in the face and of flesh in the figure. Men might dispute her claims to beauty—but no one could deny that she was, in the common phrase, an interesting person. Grace and refinement; a quickness of apprehension and a vivacity of movement, suggestive of some foreign origin; a childish readiness of wonder, in the presence of new objects—and perhaps, under happier circumstances, a childish playfulness with persons whom she loved—were all characteristic attractions of the modest stranger who was in the charge of the ugly old woman, and who was palpably the object of that wrinkled duenna's devoted love.

A travelling writing-case stood open on a table near them. In an interval of silence the

girl looked at it reluctantly. They had been talking of family affairs—and had spoken in Italian, so as to keep their domestic secrets from the ears of the strangers about them. The old woman was the first to resume the conversation.

'My Carmina, you really ought to write that letter,' she said; 'the illustrious Mrs. Gallilee is waiting to hear of our arrival in London.'

Carmina took up the pen, and put it down again with a sigh. 'We only arrived last night,' she pleaded. 'Dear old Teresa, let us have one day in London by ourselves!'

Teresa received this proposal with undisguised amazement and alarm.

'Jesu Maria! a day in London—and your aunt waiting for you all the time! She is your second mother, my dear, by appointment; and her house is your new home. And you propose to stop a whole day at an hotel, instead

of going home. Impossible! Write, my Carmina—write. See, here is the address on a card:—"Fairfield Gardens." What a pretty place it must be to live in, with such a name as that! And a sweet lady, no doubt. Come! come!'

But Carmina still resisted. 'I have never even seen my aunt,' she said. 'It is dreadful to pass my life with a stranger. Remember, I was only a child when you came to us after my mother's death. It is hardly six months yet since I lost my father. I have no one but you, and, when I go to this new home, *you* will leave me. I only ask for one more day to be together, before we part.'

The poor old duenna drew back out of sight, in the shadow of a curtain—and began to cry. Carmina took her hand, under cover of a table-cloth; Carmina knew how to console her. 'We will go and see sights,' she whispered 'and, when dinner-time comes, you

shall have a glass of the Porto-porto-wine.'

Teresa looked round out of the shadow, as easily comforted as a child. 'Sights!' she exclaimed—and dried her tears. 'Porto-porto-wine!' she repeated—and smacked her withered lips at the relishing words. 'Ah, my child, you have not forgotten the consolations I told you of, when I lived in London in my young days. To think of you, with an English father, and never in London till now! I used to go to museums and concerts sometimes, when my English mistress was pleased with me. That gracious lady often gave me a glass of the fine strong purple wine. The Holy Virgin grant that Aunt Gallilee may be as kind a woman! Such a head of hair as the other one she cannot hope to have. It was a joy to dress it. Do you think I wouldn't stay here in England with you if I could? What is to become of my old man in Italy, with his cursed

asthma, and nobody to nurse him? Oh, but those were dull years in London! The black endless streets—the dreadful Sundays—the hundreds of thousands of people, always in a hurry; always with grim faces set on business, business, business! I was glad to go back and be married in Italy. And here I am in London again, after God knows how many years. No matter. We will enjoy ourselves to-day; and when we go to Madam Gallilee's to-morrow, we will tell a little lie, and say we only arrived on the evening that has not yet come.'

The duenna's sense of humour was so tickled by this prospective view of the little lie, that she leaned back in her chair and laughed. Carmina's rare smile showed itself faintly. The terrible first interview with the unknown aunt still oppressed her. She took up a newspaper in despair. 'Oh, my old dear!' she said, 'let us get out of this dreadful room, and be reminded of Italy!'

Teresa lifted her ugly hands in bewilderment. 'Reminded of Italy—in London?'

'Is there no Italian music in London?' Carmina asked suggestively.

The duenna's bright eyes answered this in their own language. She snatched up the nearest newspaper.

It was then the height of the London concert season. Morning performances of music were announced in rows. Reading the advertised programmes, Carmina found them, in one remarkable respect, all alike. They would have led an ignorant stranger to wonder whether any such persons as Italian composers, French composers, and English composers had ever existed. The music offered to the English public was music of exclusively German (and for the most part modern German) origin. Carmina held the opinion—in common with Mozart and Rossini, as well as other people—that music without melody

is not music at all. She laid aside the newspaper.

The plan of going to a concert being thus abandoned, the idea occurred to them of seeing pictures. Teresa, in search of information, tried her luck at a great table in the middle of the room, on which useful books were liberally displayed. She returned with a catalogue of the Royal Academy Exhibition (which someone had left on the table), and with the most universally well-informed book, on a small scale, that has ever enlightened humanity—modestly described on the title-page as an Almanac.

Carmina opened the catalogue at the first page, and discovered a list of Royal Academicians. Were all these gentlemen celebrated painters? Out of nearly forty names, three only had made themselves generally known beyond the limits of England. She turned to the last page. The works of art on show

numbered more than fifteen hundred. Teresa, looking over her shoulder, made the same discovery. 'Our heads will ache, and our feet will ache,' she remarked, 'before we get out of that place.' Carmina laid aside the catalogue.

Teresa opened the Almanac at hazard, and hit on the page devoted to Amusements. Her next discovery led her to the section inscribed 'Museums.' She scored an approving mark at that place with her thumb-nail—and read the list in fluent broken English.

The British Museum? Teresa's memory of that magnificent building recalled it vividly in one respect. She shook her head. 'More headache and footache, there!' Bethnal Green; Indian Museum; College of Surgeons; Practical Geology; South Kensington; Patent Museum—all unknown to Teresa. 'The saints preserve us! what headaches and footaches in all these, if they are as big as that other one!' She went on with the list—and astonished

everybody in the room by suddenly clapping her hands. Sir John Soane's Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields. 'Ah, but I remember that! A nice little easy museum in a private house, and all sorts of pretty things to see. My dear love, trust your old Teresa. Come to Soane!'

In ten minutes more they were dressed, and on the steps of the hotel. The bright sunlight, the pleasant air, invited them to walk. On the same afternoon, when Ovid had set forth on foot for Lincoln's Inn Fields, Carmina and Teresa set forth on foot for Lincoln's Inn Fields. Trivial obstacles had kept the man away from the College. Would trivial obstacles keep the women away from the Museum?

They crossed the Strand, and entered a street which led out of it towards the North; Teresa's pride in her memory forbidding her thus far to ask their way.

Their talk—dwelling at first on Italy, and on the memory of Carmina's Italian mother—reverted to the formidable subject of Mrs. Gallilee. Teresa's hopeful view of the future turned to the cousins, and drew the picture of two charming little girls, eagerly waiting to give their innocent hearts to their young relative from Italy. 'Are there only two?' she said. 'Surely you told me there was a boy, besides the girls?' Carmina set her right. 'My cousin Ovid is a great doctor,' she continued with an air of importance. 'Poor papa used to say that our family would have reason to be proud of him.' 'Does he live at home?' asked simple Teresa. 'Oh, dear, no! He has a grand house of his own. Hundreds of sick people go there to be cured, and give hundreds of golden guineas.' Hundreds of golden guineas gained by only curing sick people, represented to Teresa's mind something in the nature of a miracle: she solemnly raised

her eyes to heaven. 'What a cousin to have! Is he young? is he handsome? is he married?'

Instead of answering these questions, Carmina looked over her shoulder. 'Is this poor creature following us?' she asked.

They had now turned to the right, and had entered a busy street leading directly to Covent Garden. The 'creature' (who was undoubtedly following them) was one of the starved and vagabond dogs of London. Every now and then, the sympathies of their race lead these inveterate wanderers to attach themselves, for the time, to some human companion, whom their mysterious insight chooses from the crowd. Teresa, with the hard feeling towards animals which is one of the serious defects of the Italian character, cried, 'Ah, the mangy beast!' and lifted her umbrella. The dog tarted back, waited a moment, and followed them again as they went on. Carmina's gentle heart gave

its pity to this lost and hungry fellow-creature. 'I must buy that poor dog something to eat,' she said—and stopped suddenly as the idea struck her.

The dog, accustomed to kicks and curses, was ignorant of kindness. Following close behind her, when she checked herself, he darted away in terror into the road. A cab was driven by rapidly at the same moment. The wheel passed over the dog's neck. And there was an end, as a man remarked looking on, of the troubles of a cur.

This common accident struck the girl's sensitive nature with horror. Helpless and speechless, she trembled piteously. The nearest open door was the door of a music-seller's shop. Teresa led her in, and asked for a chair and a glass of water. The proprietor, feeling the interest in Carmina which she seldom failed to inspire among strangers, went the length of offering her a glass of wine. Preferring water,

she soon recovered herself sufficiently to be able to leave her chair.

'May I change my mind about going to the museum?' she said to her companion. 'After what has happened, I hardly feel equal to looking at curiosities.'

Teresa's ready sympathy tried to find some acceptable alternative. 'Music would be better, wouldn't it?' she suggested.

The so-called Italian Opera was open that night, and the printed announcement of the performance was in the shop. They both looked at it. Fortune was still against them. A German opera appeared on the bill. Carmina turned to the music-seller in despair. 'Is there no music, sir, but German music to be heard in London?' she asked. The hospitable shopkeeper produced a concert programme for that afternoon—the modest enterprise of an obscure piano-forte teacher, who could only venture to address pupils, patrons,

and friends. What did he promise? Among other things, music from 'Lucia,' music from 'Norma,' music from 'Ernani.' Teresa made another approving mark with her thumb-nail; and Carmina purchased tickets.

The music-seller hurried to the door to stop the first empty cab that might pass. Carmina showed a deplorable ignorance of the law of chances. She shrank from the bare idea of getting into a cab. 'We may run over some other poor creature,' she said. 'If it isn't a dog, it may be a child next time.' Teresa and the music-seller suggested a more reasonable view as gravely as they could. Carmina humbly submitted to the claims of common sense—without yielding, for all that. 'I know I'm wrong,' she confessed. 'Don't spoil my pleasure; I can't do it!'

The strange parallel was now complete. Bound for the same destination, Carmina and

Ovid had failed to reach it alike. And Carmina had stopped to look at the garden of the British Museum, before she overtook Ovid in the quiet square.

CHAPTER IV.

If, on entering the hall, Ovid had noticed the placards, he would have found himself confronted by a coincidence. The person who gave the concert was also the person who taught music to his half-sisters. Not many days since, he had himself assisted the enterprise, by taking a ticket at his mother's request. Seeing nothing, remembering nothing—hurried by the fear of losing sight of the two strangers if there was a large audience—he impatiently paid for another ticket, at the doors.

The room was little more than half full, and so insufficiently ventilated that the atmosphere was oppressive even under those circumstances. He easily discovered the two central chairs, in

the midway row of seats, which she and her companion had chosen. There was a vacant chair (among many others) at one extremity of the row in front of them. He took that place. To look at her, without being discovered—there, so far, was the beginning and the end of his utmost desire.

The performances had already begun. So long as her attention was directed to the singers and players on the platform, he could feast his eyes on her with impunity. In an unoccupied interval, she looked at the audience—and discovered him.

Had he offended her?

If appearances were to be trusted, he had produced no impression of any sort. She quietly looked away, towards the other side of the room. The mere turning of her head was misinterpreted by Ovid as an implied rebuke. He moved to the row of seats behind her. She was now nearer to him than she had been

yet. He was again content, and more than content.

The next performance was a solo on the piano. A round of applause welcomed the player. Ovid looked at the platform for the first time. In the bowing man, with a prematurely bald head and a servile smile, he recognised Mrs. Gallilee's music-master. The inevitable inference followed. His mother might be in the room.

After careful examination of the scanty audience, he failed to discover her—thus far. She would certainly arrive, nevertheless. My money's-worth for my money was a leading principle in Mrs. Gallilee's life.

He sighed as he looked towards the door of entrance. Not for long had he revelled in the luxury of a new happiness. He had openly avowed his dislike of concerts, when his mother had made him take a ticket for *this* concert. With her quickness of apprehension what

might she not suspect, if she found him among the audience?

Come what might of it, he still kept his place; he still feasted his eyes on the slim figure of the young girl, on the gentle yet spirited carriage of her head. But the pleasure was no longer pleasure without alloy. His mother had got between them now.

The solo on the piano came to an end.

In the interval that followed, he turned once more towards the entrance. Just as he was looking away again, he heard Mrs. Gallilee's loud voice. She was administering a maternal caution to one of the children. 'Behave better here than you behaved in the carriage, or I shall take you away.'

If she found him in his present place—if she put her own clever construction on what she saw—her opinion would assuredly express itself in some way. She was one of those women who can insult another woman (and

safely disguise it) by an inquiring look. For the girl's sake, Ovid instantly moved away from her to the seats at the back of the hall.

Mrs. Gallilee made a striking entrance—dressed to perfection; powdered and painted to perfection; leading her daughters, and followed by her governess. The usher courteously indicated places near the platform. Mrs. Gallilee astonished him by a little lecture on acoustics, delivered with the sweetest condescension. Her Christian humility smiled, and called the usher, Sir. 'Sound, sir, is most perfectly heard towards the centre of the auditorium.' She led the way towards the centre. Vacant places invited her to the row of seats occupied by Carmina and Teresa. She, the unknown aunt, seated herself next to the unknown niece.

They looked at each other.

Perhaps, it was the heat of the room.

Perhaps, she had not perfectly recovered the nervous shock of seeing the dog killed. Carmina's head sank on good Teresa's shoulder. She had fainted.

CHAPTER V.

'MAY I ask for a cup of tea, Miss Minerva?'

'Delighted, I'm sure, Mr. Le Frank.'

'And was Mrs. Gallilee pleased with the Concert?'

'Charmed.'

Mr. Le Frank shook his head. 'I am afraid there was a drawback,' he suggested. 'You forget the lady who fainted. So alarming to the audience. So disagreeable to the artists.'

'Take care, Mr. Le Frank! These new houses are flimsily built; they might hear you upstairs. The fainting lady is upstairs. All the elements of a romance are upstairs. Is your tea to your liking?'

In this playfully provocative manner, Miss Minerva (the governess) trifled with the curiosity of Mr. Le Frank (the music-master), as the proverbial cat trifles with the terror of the captive mouse. The man of the bald head and the servile smile showed a polite interest in the coming disclosure: he opened his deeply-sunk eyes, and lazily lifted his delicate eyebrows.

He had called at Mrs. Gallilee's house, after the concert, to get a little tea (with a large infusion of praise) in the schoolroom. A striking personal contrast confronted him, in the face of the lady who was dispensing the hospitalities of the table. Mr. Le Frank's plump cheeks were, in colour, of the obtrusively florid sort. The relics of yellow hair, still adhering to the sides of his head, looked as silkily frail as spun glass. His noble beard made amends for his untimely baldness. The glossy glory of it exhaled delicious perfumes; the keenest eyes might have tried in vain to

discover a hair that was out of place. Miss Minerva's eager sallow face, so lean, and so hard, and so long, looked, by contrast, as if it wanted some sort of discreet covering thrown over some part of it. Her coarse black hair projected like a penthouse over her bushy black eyebrows and her keen black eyes. Oh, dear me (as they said in the servants' hall), she would never be married—so yellow and so learned, so ugly and so poor! And yet, if mystery is interesting, this was an interesting woman. The people about her felt an uneasy perception of something secret, ominously secret, in the nature of the governess which defied detection. If Inquisitive Science, vowed to medical research, could dissect firmness of will, working at its steadiest repressive action—then, the mystery of Miss Minerva's inner nature might possibly have been revealed. As it was, nothing more remarkable exposed itself to view than an irritable temper; serving

perhaps as safety-valve to an underlying explosive force, which (with strong enough temptation and sufficient opportunity) might yet break out.

'Gently, Mr. Le Frank! The tea is hot—you may burn your mouth. How am I to tell you what has happened?' Miss Minerva dropped the playfully provocative tone, with infinite tact, exactly at the right moment. 'Just imagine,' she resumed, 'a scene on the stage, occurring in private life. The lady who fainted at your concert, turns out to be no less a person than Mrs. Gallilee's niece!'

The general folly which reads a prospectus and blindly speculates in shares, is matched by the equally diffused stupidity, which is incapable of discovering that there can be any possible relation between fiction and truth. Say it's in a novel—and you are a fool if you believe it. Say it's in a newspaper—and you are a fool if you doubt it. Mr. Le Frank,

following the general example, followed it on this occasion a little too unreservedly. He avowed his doubts of the circumstance just related, although it was, on the authority of a lady, a circumstance occurring in real life! Far from being offended, Miss Minerva cordially sympathised with him.

'It *is* too theatrical to be believed,' she admitted; 'but this fainting young person is positively the interesting stranger we have been expecting from Italy. You know Mrs. Gallilee. Her's was the first smelling-bottle produced; her's was the presence of mind which suggested a horizontal position. "Help the heart," she said; "don't impede it." The whole theory of fainting fits, in six words! In another moment,' proceeded the governess making a theatrical point without suspecting it —'in another moment, Mrs. Gallilee herself stood in need of the smelling-bottle."

Mr. Le Frank was not a true believer, even yet. 'You don't mean *she* fainted!' he said.

Miss Minerva held up the indicative forefinger, with which she emphasised instruction when her pupils required rousing. 'Mrs. Gallilee's strength of mind—as I was about to say, if you had listened to me—resisted the shock. What the effort must have cost her you will presently understand. Our interesting young lady was accompanied by a hideous old foreign woman who completely lost her head. She smacked her hands distractedly; she called on the saints (without producing the slightest effect)—but she mixed up a name, remarkable even in Italy, with the rest of the delirium; and *that* was serious. Put yourself in Mrs. Gallilee's place—'

'I couldn't do it,' said Mr. Le Frank, with humility.

Miss Minerva passed over this reply without

notice. Perhaps she was not a believer in the humility of musicians.

'The young lady's Christian name,' she proceeded, 'is Carmina; (put the accent, if you please, on the *first* syllable). The moment Mrs. Gallilee heard the name, it struck her like a blow. She enlightened the old woman, and asserted herself as Miss Carmina's aunt in an instant. "I am Mrs. Gallilee:" that was all she said. The result'—Miss Minerva paused, and pointed to the ceiling; 'the result is up there. Our charming guest was on the sofa, and the hideous old nurse was fanning her, when I had the honour of seeing them just now. No, Mr. Le Frank! I haven't done yet. There is a last act in this drama of private life still to relate. A medical gentleman was present at the concert, who offered his services in reviving Miss Carmina. The same gentleman is now in attendance on the interesting patient. Can you guess who he is?'

Mr. Le Frank had sold a ticket for his concert to the medical adviser of the family—one Mr. Null. A cautious guess in this direction seemed to offer the likeliest chance of success.

'He is a patron of music,' the pianist began.

'He hates music,' the governess interposed.

'I mean Mr. Null,' Mr. Le Frank persisted.

'*I* mean—' Miss Minerva paused (like the cat with the mouse again!)—'*I* mean, Mr. Ovid Vere.'

What form the music-master's astonishment might have assumed may be matter for speculation, it was never destined to become matter of fact. At the moment when Miss Minerva overwhelmed him with the climax of her story, a little, rosy, elderly gentleman, with a round face, a sweet smile, and a curly gray head, walked into the room, accompanied by two girls. Persons of small importance—only Mr. Gallilee and his daughters.

'How d'ye-do, Mr. Le Frank. I hope you got plenty of money by the concert. I gave away my own two tickets. You will excuse me, I'm sure. Music, I can't think why, always sends me to sleep. Here are your two pupils, Miss Minerva, safe and sound. It struck me we were rather in the way, when that sweet young creature was brought home. Sadly in want of quiet, poor thing—not in want of *us* Mrs. Gallilee and Ovid, so clever and attentive, were just the right people in the right place. So I put on my hat—I'm always available, Mr. Le Frank; I have the great advantage of never having anything to do—and I said to the girls, "Let's have a walk." We had no particular place to go to—that's another advantage of mine—so we drifted about. I didn't mean it, but, somehow or other, we stopped at a pastry-cook's shop. What was the name of the pastry-cook?'

So far Mr. Gallilee proceeded, speaking in

the oddest self-contradictory voice, if such a description is permissible—a voice at once high in pitch and mild in tone: in short, as Mr. Le Frank once professionally remarked, a soft falsetto. When the good gentleman paused to make his little effort of memory, his eldest daughter—aged twelve, and always ready to distinguish herself—saw her opportunity, and took the rest of the narrative into her own hands.

Miss Maria, named after her mother, was one of the successful new products of the age we live in—the conventionally-charming child (who has never been smacked); possessed of the large round eyes that we see in pictures, and the sweet manners and perfect principles that we read of in books. She called everybody 'dear;' she knew to a nicety how much oxygen she wanted in the composition of her native air; and—alas, poor wretch!—she had never wetted her shoes or dirtied her face since the day when she was born.

'Dear Miss Minerva,' said Maria, 'the pastry-cook's name was Timbal. We have had ices.'

His mind being now set at rest on the subject of the pastry-cook, Mr. Gallilee turned to his youngest daughter—aged ten, and one of the unsuccessful products of the age we live in. This was a curiously slow, quaint, self-contained child; the image of her father, with an occasional reflection of his smile; incurably stupid, or incurably perverse—the friends of the family were not quite sure which. Whether she might have been over-crammed with useless knowledge, was not a question in connection with the subject which occurred to anybody.

'Rouse yourself, Zo,' said Mr. Gallilee. 'What did we have besides ices?'

Zoe (known to her father, by vulgar abbreviation, as 'Zo') took Mr. Gallilee's stumpy red hand, and held hard by it as if

that was the one way in which a dull child could rouse herself, with a prospect of success.

'I've had so many of them,' she said; 'I don't know. Ask Maria.'

Maria responded with the sweetest readiness. 'Dear Zoe, you are *so* slow! Cheese-cakes.'

Mr. Gallilee patted Zoe's head as encouragingly as if she had discovered the right answer by herself. 'That's right—ices and cheese-cakes,' he said. 'We tried cream-ice, and then we tried water-ice. The children, Miss Minerva, preferred the cream-ice. And, do you know, I'm of their opinion. There's something in a cream-ice—what do you think yourself of cream-ices, Mr. Le Frank?'

It was one among the many weaknesses of Mr. Gallilee's character to be incapable of opening his lips without, sooner or later, taking somebody into his confidence. In the merest trifles, he instinctively invited sympathy

and agreement from any person within his reach—from a total stranger quite as readily as from an intimate friend. Mr. Le Frank, representing the present Court of Social Appeal, attempted to deliver judgment on the question of ices, and was interrupted without ceremony by Miss Minerva. She, too, had been waiting her opportunity to speak, and she now took it —not amiably.

'With all possible respect, Mr. Gallilee, I venture to entreat that you will be a little more thoughtful, where the children are concerned. I beg your pardon, Mr. Le Frank, for interrupting you—but it is really a little too hard on Me. I am held responsible for the health of these girls; I am blamed over and over again, when it is not my fault, for irregularities in their diet—and there they are, at this moment, chilled with ices and cloyed with cakes! What will Mrs. Gallilee say?'

'Don't tell her,' Mr. Gallilee suggested.

'The girls will be thirsty for the rest of the evening,' Miss Minerva persisted; 'the girls will have no appetite for the last meal before bedtime. And their mother will ask Me what it means.'

'My good creature,' cried Mr. Gallilee, 'don't be afraid of the girls' appetites! Take off their hats, and give them something nice for supper. They inherit my stomach, Miss Minerva —and they'll "tuck in," as we used to say at school. Did they say so in your time, Mr. Le Frank?'

Mrs. Gallilee's governess and vulgar expressions were anomalies never to be reconciled, under any circumstances. Miss Minerva took off the hats in stern silence. Even 'Papa' might have seen the contempt in her face, if she had not managed to hide it in this way, by means of the girls.

In the silence that ensued, Mr. Le Frank had his chance of speaking, and showed himself

to be a gentleman with a happily-balanced character—a musician, with an eye to business. Using gratitude to Mr. Gallilee as a means of persuasion, he gently pushed the interests of a friend who was giving a concert next week. 'We poor artists have our faults, my dear sir; but we are all earnest in helping each other. My friend sang for nothing at my concert. Don't suppose for a moment that he expects it of me! But I am going to play for nothing at his concert. May I appeal to your kind patronage to take two tickets?' The reply ended appropriately in musical sound—a golden tinkling, in Mr. Le Frank's pocket.

Having paid his tribute to art and artists, Mr. Gallilee looked furtively at Miss Minerva. On the wise principle of letting well alone, he perceived that the happy time had arrived for leaving the room. How was he to make his exit? He prided himself on his readiness of resource, in difficulties of this sort, and he was

equal to the occasion as usual—he said he would go to his club.

'We really have a capital smoking-room at that club,' he said. 'I do like a good cigar; and—what do *you* think, Mr. Le Frank?—isn't a pint of champagne nice drinking, this hot weather? Just cooled with ice—I don't know whether you feel the weather, Miss Minerva, as I do?—and poured, fizzing, into a silver mug. Lord, how delicious! Good-bye, girls. Give me a kiss before I go.'

Maria led the way, as became the elder. She not only gave the kiss, but threw an appropriate sentiment into the bargain. 'I do love you, dear papa!' said this perfect daughter—with a look in Miss Minerva's direction, which might have been a malicious look in any eyes but Maria's.

Mr. Gallilee turned to his youngest child. 'Well, Zo—what do *you* say?'

Zo took her father's hand once more, and

rubbed her head against it like a cat. This new method of expressing filial affection seemed to interest Mr. Gallilee. 'Does your head itch, my dear?' he asked. The idea was new to Zo. She brightened, and looked at her father with a sly smile. 'Why do you do it?' Miss Minerva asked sharply. Zo clouded over again, and answered, 'I don't know.' Mr. Gallilee rewarded her with a kiss, and went away to champagne and the club.

Mr. Le Frank left the schoolroom next. He paid the governess the compliment of reverting to her narrative of events at the concert.

'I am greatly struck,' he said, 'by what you told me about Mr. Ovid Vere. We may, perhaps, have misjudged him, in thinking that he doesn't like music. His coming to my concert suggests a more cheering view. Do you think there would be any impropriety in my calling to thank him? Perhaps it would be better if I wrote, and enclosed two tickets

for my friend's concert? To tell you the truth, I've pledged myself to dispose of a certain number of tickets. My friend is so much in request—it's expecting too much to ask him to sing for nothing. I think I'll write. Good-evening!'

Left alone with her pupils, Miss Minerva looked at her watch. 'Prepare your lessons for to-morrow,' she said.

The girls produced their books. Maria's library of knowledge was in perfect order. The pages over which Zo pondered in endless perplexity were crumpled by weary fingers, and stained by frequent tears. Oh, fatal knowledge! mercifully forbidden to the first two of our race, who shall count the crimes and stupidities committed in your name?

Miss Minerva leaned back in her easy-chair. Her mind was occupied by the mysterious question of Ovid's presence at the concert. She raised her keenly penetrating

eyes to the ceiling, and listened for sounds from above.

'I wonder,' she thought to herself, 'what they are doing upstairs?'

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. GALLILEE was as complete a mistress of the practice of domestic virtue as of the theory of acoustics and fainting fits. At dressing with taste, and ordering dinners with invention; at heading her table gracefully, and making her guests comfortable; at managing refractory servants and detecting dishonest tradespeople, she was the equal of the least intellectual woman that ever lived. Her preparations for the reception of her niece were finished in advance, without an oversight in the smallest detail. Carmina's inviting bedroom, in blue, opened into Carmina's irresistible sitting-room, in brown. The ventilation was arranged, the light and shade were disposed, the flowers

were attractively placed, under Mrs. Gallilee's infallible superintendence. Before Carmina had recovered her senses she was provided with a second mother, who played the part to perfection.

The four persons, now assembled in the pretty sitting-room upstairs, were in a position of insupportable embarrassment towards each other.

Finding her son at a concert (after he had told her that he hated music) Mrs. Gallilee, had first discovered him hurrying to the assistance of a young lady in a swoon, with all the anxiety and alarm which he might have shown in the case of a near and dear friend. And yet, when this stranger was revealed as a relation, he had displayed an amazement equal to her own! What explanation could reconcile such contradictions as these?

As for Carmina, her conduct complicated the mystery.

What was she doing at a concert, when she ought to have been on her way to her aunt's house? Why, if she must faint when the hot room had not overpowered anyone else, had she failed to recover in the usual way? There she lay on the sofa, alternately flushing and turning pale when she was spoken to; ill at ease in the most comfortable house in London; timid and confused under the care of her best friends. Making all allowance for a sensitive temperament, could a long journey from Italy, and a childish fright at seeing a dog run over, account for such a state of things as this?

Annoyed and perplexed—but yet far too prudent to commit herself ignorantly to inquiries which might lead to future embarrassment—Mrs. Gallilee tried suggestive small talk as a means of enlightenment. The wrinkled duenna, sitting miserably on satin supported by frail gilt legs, seemed to take her tone of

feeling from her young mistress, exactly as she took her orders. Mrs. Gallilee spoke to her in English, and spoke to her in Italian—and could make nothing of the experiment in either case. The wild old creature seemed to be afraid to look at her.

Ovid himself proved to be just as difficult to fathom, in another way.

He certainly answered when his mother spoke to him, but always briefly, and in the same absent tone. He asked no questions, and offered no explanations. The sense of embarrassment, on his side, had produced unaccountable changes. He showed the needful attention to Carmina, with a silent gentleness which presented him in a new character. His customary manner with ailing persons, women as well as men, was rather abrupt: his quick perception hurried him into taking the words out of their mouths (too pleasantly to give offence) when they were describing their

symptoms. There he sat now, contemplating his pale little cousin, with a patient attention wonderful to see; listening to the commonplace words which dropped at intervals from her lips, as if—in his state of health, and with the doubtful prospect which it implied—there were no serious interests to occupy his mind.

Mrs. Gallilee could endure it no longer.

If she had not deliberately starved her imagination, and emptied her heart of any tenderness of feeling which it might once have possessed, her son's odd behaviour would have interested instead of perplexing her. As it was, her scientific education left her as completely in the dark, where questions of sentiment were concerned, as if her experience of humanity, in its relation to love, had been experience in the cannibal islands. She decided on leaving her niece to repose, and on taking her son away with her.

'In your present state of health, Ovid,' she

began, 'Carmina must not accept your professional advice.'

Something in those words stung Ovid's temper.

'My professional advice?' he repeated. 'You talk as if she was seriously ill!'

Carmina's sweet smile stopped him there.

'We don't know what may happen,' she said, playfully.

'God forbid *that* should happen!' He spoke so fervently that the women all looked at him in surprise.

Mrs. Gallilee turned to her niece, and proceeded quietly with what she had to say.

'Ovid is so sadly overworked, my dear, that I actually rejoice in his giving up practice, and going away from us to-morrow. We will leave you for the present with your old friend. Pray ring, if you want anything.' She kissed her hand to Carmina, and, beckoning to her son, advanced towards the door.

Teresa looked at her, and suddenly looked away again. Mrs. Gallilee stopped on her way out, at a chiffonier, and altered the arrangement of some of the china on it. The duenna followed on tiptoe—folded her thumb and two middle fingers into the palm of her hand—and, stretching out the forefinger and the little finger, touched Mrs. Gallilee on the back, so softly that she was unaware of it. 'The Evil Eye,' Teresa whispered to herself in Italian, as she stole back to her place.

Ovid lingered near his cousin: neither of them had seen what Teresa had done. He rose reluctantly to go. Feeling his little attentions gratefully, Carmina checked him with innocent familiarity as he left his chair. 'I must thank you,' she said, simply; 'it seems hard indeed that you, who cure others, should suffer from illness yourself.'

Teresa, watching them with interest, came a little nearer.

She could now examine Ovid's face with close and jealous scrutiny. Mrs. Gallilee reminded her son that she was waiting for him. He had some last words yet to say. The duenna drew back from the sofa, still looking at Ovid: she muttered to herself, 'Holy Teresa, my patroness, show me that man's soul in his face!' At last, Ovid took his leave. 'I shall call and see how you are to-morrow,' he said, 'before I go.' He nodded kindly to Teresa. Instead of being satisfied with that act of courtesy, she wanted something more. 'May I shake hands?' she asked. Mrs. Gallilee was a Liberal in politics; never had her principles been tried, as they were tried when she heard those words. Teresa wrung Ovid's hand with tremulous energy—still intent on reading his character in his face. He asked her, smiling, what she saw to interest her. 'A good man, I hope,' she answered, sternly. Carmina and Ovid were amused. Teresa

rebuked them, as if they had been children. 'Laugh at some fitter time,' she said, 'not now.'

Descending the stairs, Mrs. Gallilee and Ovid met the footman. 'Mr. Mool is in the library, ma'am,' the man said.

'Have you anything to do, Ovid, for the next half-hour?' his mother asked.

'Do you wish me to see Mr. Mool? If it's law-business, I am afraid I shall not be of much use.'

'The lawyer is here by appointment, with a copy of your late uncle's Will,' Mrs. Gallilee answered. 'You may have some interest in it. I think you ought to hear it read.'

Ovid showed no inclination to adopt this proposal. He asked an idle question. 'I heard of their finding the Will—are there any romantic circumstances?'

Mrs. Gallilee surveyed her son with an expression of good-humoured contempt. 'What a boy you are, in some things! Have you

been reading a novel lately? My dear, when the people in Italy made up their minds, at last, to have the furniture in your uncle's room taken to pieces, they found the Will. It had slipped behind a drawer, in a rotten old cabinet, full of useless papers. Nothing romantic (thank God!), and nothing (as Mr. Mool's letter tells me) that can lead to misunderstandings or disputes.'

Ovid's indifference was not to be conquered. He left it to his mother to send him word if he had a legacy. 'I am not as much interested in it as you are,' he explained. 'Plenty of money left to you, of course?' He was evidently thinking all the time of something else.

Mrs. Gallilee stopped in the hall, with an air of downright alarm.

'Your mind is in a dreadful state,' she said. 'Have you really forgotten what I told you, only yesterday? The Will appoints me Carmina's guardian.'

He had plainly forgotten it—he started, when his mother recalled the circumstance. 'Curious,' he said to himself, 'that I was not reminded of it, when I saw Carmina's rooms prepared for her.' His mother, anxiously looking at him, observed that his face brightened when he spoke of Carmina. He suddenly changed his mind.

'Make allowances for an overworked man,' he said 'You are quite right. I ought to hear the Will read—I am at your service.'

Even Mrs. Gallilee now drew the right inference at last. She made no remark. Something seemed to move feebly under her powder and paint. Soft emotion trying to find its way to the surface? Impossible!

As they entered the library together, Miss Minerva returned to the schoolroom. She had lingered on the upper landing, and had heard the conversation between mother and son.

CHAPTER VII.

THE library at Fairfield Gardens possessed two special attractions, besides the books. It opened into a large conservatory; and it was adorned by an admirable portrait of Mrs. Gallilee, painted by her brother.

Waiting the appearance of the fair original, Mr. Mool looked at the portrait, and then mentally reviewed the history of Mrs. Gallilee's family. What he did next, no person acquainted with the habits of lawyers will be weak enough to believe. Mr. Mool blushed.

Is this the language of exaggeration, describing a human anomaly on the roll of attorneys? The fact shall be left to answer the question. Mr. Mool had made a mistake in

his choice of a profession. The result of the mistake was—a shy lawyer.

Attended by such circumstances as these, the history of the family assumes, for the moment, a certain importance. It is connected with a blushing attorney. It will explain what happened on the reading of the Will. And it is sure beforehand of a favourable reception—for it is all about money.

Old Robert Graywell began life as the son of a small farmer. He was generally considered to be rather an eccentric man; but prospered, nevertheless, as a merchant in the city of London. When he retired from business, he possessed a house and estate in the country, and a handsome fortune safely invested in the Funds.

His children were three in number:—his son Robert, and his daughters Maria and Susan.

The death of his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, was the first serious calamity of his life. He retired to his estate a soured and broken man. Loving husbands are not always, as a necessary consequence, tender fathers. Old Robert's daughters afforded him no consolation on their mother's death. Their anxiety about their mourning dresses so disgusted him that he kept out of their way. No extraordinary interest was connected with their prospects in life: they would be married —and there would be an end of them. As for the son, he had long since placed himself beyond the narrow range of his father's sympathies. In the first place, his refusal to qualify himself for a mercantile career had made it necessary to dispose of the business to strangers. In the second place, young Robert Graywell proved—without any hereditary influence, and in the face of the strongest discouragement—to be a born painter! One of

the greatest artists of that day saw the boy's first efforts, and pronounced judgment in these plain words: 'What a pity he has not got his bread to earn by his brush!'

On the death of old Robert, his daughters found themselves (to use their own expression) reduced to a trumpery legacy of ten thousand pounds each. Their brother inherited the estate, and the bulk of the property—not because his father cared about founding a family, but because the boy had always been his mother's favourite.

The first of the three children to marry was the eldest sister.

Maria considered herself fortunate in captivating Mr. Vere—a man of old family, with a high sense of what he owed to his name. He had a sufficient income, and he wanted no more. His wife's dowry was settled on herself. When he died, he left her a life-interest in his property amounting to six hundred a year.

This, added to the annual proceeds of her own little fortune, made an income of one thousand pounds. The remainder of Mr. Vere's property was left to his only surviving child, Ovid.

With a thousand a year for herself, and with two thousand a year for her son, on his coming of age, the widowed Maria might possibly have been satisfied—but for the extraordinary presumption of her younger sister.

Susan, ranking second in age, ranked second also in beauty; and yet, in the race for a husband, Susan won the prize!

Soon after her sister's marriage, she made a conquest of a Scotch nobleman, possessed of a palace in London, and a palace in Scotland, and a rent-roll of forty thousand pounds. Maria, to use her own expression, never recovered it. From the horrid day when Susan became Lady Northlake, Maria became a serious woman. All her earthly interests

centred now in the cultivation of her intellect. She started on that glorious career, which associated her with the march of science. In only a year afterwards—as an example of the progress which a resolute woman can make—she was familiar with zoophyte fossils, and had succeeded in dissecting the nervous system of a bee.

Was there no counter-attraction in her married life?

Very little. Mr. Vere felt no sympathy with his wife's scientific pursuits. On her husband's death, did she find no consolation in her son? Let her speak for herself. 'My son fills my heart. But the school, the university, and the hospital have all in turn taken his education out of my hands. My mind must be filled, as well as my heart.' She seized her exquisite instruments, and returned to the nervous system of the bee.

In course of time, Mr. John Gallilee—

'drifting about,' as he said of himself—drifted across the path of science.

The widowed Mrs. Vere (as exhibited in public) was still a fine woman. Mr. Gallilee admired 'that style'; and Mr. Gallilee had fifty thousand pounds. Only a little more, to my lord and my lady, than one year's income. But, invested at four per cent., it added an annual two thousand pounds to Mrs. Vere's annual one thousand. Result, three thousand a year, encumbered with Mr. Gallilee. On reflection, Mrs. Vere accepted the encumbrance —and reaped her reward. Susan was no longer distinguished as the sister who had her dresses made in Paris; and Mrs. Gallilee was not now subjected to the indignity of getting a lift in Lady Northlake's carriage.

What was the history of Robert, during this interval of time? In two words, Robert disgraced himself.

Taking possession of his country house, the

new squire was invited to contribute towards the expense of a pack of hounds kept by subscription in the neighbourhood, and was advised to make acquaintance with his fellow-sportsmen by giving a hunt-breakfast. He answered very politely; but the fact was not to be concealed—the new man refused to encourage hunting: he thought that noble amusement stupid and cruel. For the same reason, he refused to preserve game. A last mistake was left to make, and he made it. After returning the rector's visit, he failed to appear at church. No person with the smallest knowledge of the English character, as exhibited in an English county, will fail to foresee that Robert's residence on his estate was destined to come, sooner or later, to an untimely end. When he had finished his sketches of the picturesque aspects of his landed property, he disappeared. The estate was not entailed. Old Robert—who had insisted on the minutest formalities and details in

providing for his dearly-loved wife—was impenetrably careless about the future of his children. 'My fortune has no value now in my eyes,' he said to judicious friends; 'let them run through it all, if they please. It would do them a deal of good if they were obliged to earn their own living, like better people than themselves.' Left free to take his own way, Robert sold the estate merely to get rid of it. With no expensive tastes, except the taste for buying pictures, he became a richer man than ever.

When their brother next communicated with them, Lady Northlake and Mrs. Gallilee heard of him as a voluntary exile in Italy. He was building a studio and a gallery; he was contemplating a series of pictures; and he was a happy man for the first time in his life.

Another interval passed—and the sisters heard of Robert again.

Having already outraged the sense of pro-

priety among his English neighbours, he now degraded himself in the estimation of his family, by marrying a 'model.' The letter announcing this event declared, with perfect truth, that he had chosen a virtuous woman for his wife. She sat to artists, as any lady might sit to any artist, 'for the head only.' Her parents gained a bare subsistence by farming their own little morsel of land; they were honest people—and what did brother Robert care for rank? His own grandfather had been a farmer.

Lady Northlake and Mrs. Gallilee felt it due to themselves to hold a consultation, on the subject of their sister-in-law. Was it desirable, in their own social interests, to cast Robert off from that moment?

Susan (previously advised by her kind-hearted husband) leaned to the side of mercy. Robert's letter informed them that he proposed to live, and die, in Italy. If he held to this resolution, his marriage would surely be an en-

durable misfortune to his relatives in London. 'Suppose we write to him,' Susan concluded, 'and say we are surprised, but we have no doubt he knows best. We offer our congratulations to Mrs. Robert, and our sincere wishes for his happiness.'

To Lady Northlake's astonishment Mrs. Gallilee adopted this indulgent point of view, without a word of protest. She had her reasons —but they were not producible to a relative whose husband had forty thousand a year. Robert had paid her debts.

An income of three thousand pounds, even in these days, represents a handsome competence—provided you don't 'owe a duty to society.' In Mrs. Gallilee's position, an income of three thousand pounds represented genteel poverty. She was getting into debt again; and she was meditating future designs on her brother's purse. A charming letter to Robert was the result. It ended with, 'Do send me a

photograph of your lovely wife!' When the poor 'model' died, not many years afterwards, leaving one little daughter, Mrs. Galilee implored her brother to return to England. 'Come, dearest Robert, and find consolation and a home, under the roof of your affectionate Maria.'

But Robert remained in Italy, and was buried in Italy. At the date of his death, he had three times paid his elder sister's debts. On every occasion when he helped her in this liberal way, she proved her gratitude by anticipating a larger, and a larger, and a larger legacy if she outlived him.

Knowing (as the family lawyer) what sums of money Mrs. Gallilee had extracted from her brother, Mr. Mool also knew that the advances thus made had been considered as representing the legacy, to which she might otherwise have had some sisterly claim. It was his duty to have warned her of this, when she questioned

him generally on the subject of the Will; and he had said nothing about it, acting under a most unbecoming motive—in plain words, the motive of fear. From the self-reproachful feeling that now disturbed him, had risen that wonderful blush which made its appearance on Mr. Mool's countenance. He was actually ashamed of himself. After all, is it too much to have suggested that he was a human anomaly on the roll of attorneys?

CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Gallilee made her appearance in the library—and Mr. Mool's pulse accelerated its beat. Mrs. Gallilee's son followed her into the room—and Mr. Mool's pulse steadied itself again. By special arrangement with the lawyer, Ovid had been always kept in ignorance of his mother's affairs. No matter how angry she might be in the course of the next few minutes, she could hardly express her indignation in the presence of her son.

Joyous anticipation has the happiest effect on female beauty. Mrs. Gallilee looked remarkably well, that day. Having rather a round and full face, she wore her hair (coloured

from youthful nature) in a fringe across her forehead, balanced on either side by clusters of charming little curls. Her mourning for Robert was worthy of its Parisian origin; it showed to perfect advantage the bloom of her complexion and the whiteness of her neck—also worthy of *their* Parisian origin. She looked like a portrait of the period of Charles the Second, endowed with life.

'And how do you do, Mr. Mool? Have you been looking at my ferns?'

The ferns were grouped at the entrance, leading from the library to the conservatory. They had certainly not escaped the notice of the lawyer, who possessed a hot-house of his own, and who was an enthusiast in botany. It now occurred to him—if he innocently provoked embarrassing results—that ferns might be turned to useful and harmless account as a means of introducing a change of subject. 'Even when she hasn't spoken a word,' thought

Mr. Mool, consulting his recollections, 'I have felt her eyes go through me like a knife.'

'Spare us the technicalities, please,' Mrs. Gallilee continued, pointing to the documents on the table. 'I want to be exactly acquainted with the duties I owe to Carmina. And, by the way, I naturally feel some interest in knowing whether Lady Northlake has any place in the Will.'

Mrs. Gallilee never said 'my sister,' never spoke in the family circle of 'Susan.' The inexhaustible sense of injury, aroused by that magnificent marriage, asserted itself in keeping her sister at the full distance implied by never forgetting her title.

'The first legacy mentioned in the Will,' said Mr. Mool, is a legacy to Lady Northlake.' Mrs. Gallilee's face turned as hard as iron. 'One hundred pounds,' Mr. Mool continued, 'to buy a mourning ring.' Mrs. Gallilee's eyes

became eloquent in an instant, and said as if in words, 'Thank Heaven!'

'So like your uncle's unpretending good sense,' she remarked to her son. 'Any other legacy to Lady Northlake would have been simply absurd. Yes, Mr. Mool? Perhaps my name follows?'

Mr. Mool cast a side-look at the ferns. He afterwards described his sensations as reminding him of previous experience in a dentist's chair, at the awful moment when the operator says 'Let me look,' and has his devilish instrument hidden in his hand. The 'situation,' to use the language of the stage, was indeed critical enough already. Ovid added to the horror of it by making a feeble joke. 'What will you take for your chance, mother?'

Before bad became worse, Mr. Mool summoned the energy of despair. He wisely read the exact words of the Will, this time: '"And I

give and bequeath to my sister, Mrs. Maria Gallilee, one hundred pounds."'

Ovid's astonishment could only express itself in action. He started to his feet.

Mr. Mool went on reading. '"Free of legacy duty, to buy a mourning ring——"'

'Impossible!' Ovid broke out.

Mr. Mool finished the sentence. '"And my sister will understand the motive which animates me in making this bequest."' He laid the Will on the table, and ventured to look up. At the same time, Ovid turned to his mother, struck by the words which had been just read, and eager to inquire what their meaning might be.

Happily for themselves, the two men never knew what the preservation of their tranquillity owed to that one moment of delay.

If they had looked at Mrs. Gallilee, when she was first aware of her position in the Will, they might have seen the incarnate Devil self-revealed in a human face. They might have

read, in her eyes and on her lips, a warning hardly less fearful than the unearthly writing on the wall, which told the Eastern Monarch of his coming death. 'See this woman, and know what *I* can do with her, when she has repelled her guardian angel, and her soul is left to Me.'

But the revelation showed itself, and vanished. Her face was composed again, when her son and her lawyer looked at it. Her voice was under control; her inbred capacity for deceit was ready for action. All those formidable qualities in her nature, which a gentler and wiser training than hers had been might have held in check—by development of preservative influences that lay inert—were now driven back to their lurking-place; leaving only the faintest traces of their momentary appearance on the surface. Her breathing seemed to be oppressed; her eyelids drooped heavily—and that was all.

'Is the room too hot for you?' Ovid asked.

It was a harmless question, but any question annoyed her at that moment. 'Nonsense!' she exclaimed irritably.

'The atmosphere of the conservatory is rich in reviving smells,' Mr. Mool remarked. 'Do I detect, among the delightful perfumes which reach us, the fragrant root-stock of the American fern? If I am wrong, Mrs. Gallilee, may I send you some of the sweet-smelling Maidenhair from my own little hot-house?' He smiled persuasively. The ferns were already justifying his confidence in their peace-making virtues, turned discreetly to account. Those terrible eyes rested on him mercifully. Not even a covert allusion to his silence in the matter of the legacy escaped her. Did the lawyer's artlessly abrupt attempt to change the subject warn her to be on her guard? In any case, she thanked him with the readiest courtesy for his kind offer. Might she trouble

him in the meantime to let her see the Will?

She read attentively the concluding words of the clause in which her name appeared—'My sister will understand the motive which animates me in making this bequest'—and then handed back the Will to Mr. Mool. Before Ovid could ask for it, she was ready with a plausible explanation. 'When your uncle became a husband and a father,' she said, 'those claims on him were paramount. He knew that a token of remembrance (the smaller the better) was all I could accept, if I happened to outlive him. Please go on, Mr. Mool.'

In one respect, Ovid resembled his late uncle. They both belonged to that high-minded order of men, who are slow to suspect, and therefore easy to deceive. Ovid tenderly took his mother's hand.

'I ought to have known it,' he said, 'without obliging you to tell me.'

Mrs. Gallilee did *not* blush. Mr. Mool did.

'Go on!' Mrs. Gallilee repeated. Mr. Mool looked at Ovid. 'The next name, Mr. Vere, is yours.'

'Does my uncle remember me as he has remembered my mother?' asked Ovid.

'Yes, sir—and let me tell you, a very pretty compliment is attached to the bequest. "It is needless" (your late uncle says) "to leave any more important proof of remembrance to my nephew. His father has already provided for him; and, with his rare abilities, he will make a second fortune by the exercise of his profession." Most gratifying, Mrs. Gallilee, is it not? The next clause provides for the good old housekeeper Teresa, and for her husband if he survives her, in the following terms——'

Mrs. Gallilee was becoming impatient to hear more of herself. 'We may, I think, pass over that,' she suggested, 'and get to the part

of it which relates to Carmina and me. Don't think I am impatient; I am only desirous——'

The growling of a dog in the conservatory interrupted her. 'That tiresome creature!' she said sharply; 'I shall be obliged to get rid of him!'

Mr. Mool volunteered to drive the dog out of the conservatory. Mrs. Gallilee, as irritable as ever, stopped him at the door.

'Don't, Mr. Mool! That dog's temper is not to be trusted. He shows it with Miss Minerva, my governess—growls just in that way whenever he sees her. I dare say he smells you. There! Now he barks! You are only making him worse. Come back!'

Being at the door, gentle Mr. Mool tried the ferns as peace-makers once more. He gathered a leaf, and returned to his place in a state of meek admiration. 'The flowering fern!' he said softly. 'A really fine specimen, Mrs. Gallilee, of the Osmunda Regalis. What

a world of beauty in this bipinnate frond! One hardly knows where the stalk ends and the leaf begins!'

The dog, a bright little terrier, came trotting into the library. He saluted the company briskly with his tail, not excepting Mr. Mool. No growl, or approach to a growl, now escaped him. The manner in which he laid himself down at Mrs. Gallilee's feet completely refuted her aspersion on his temper. Ovid suggested that he might have been provoked by a cat in the conservatory.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mool turned over a page of the Will, and arrived at the clauses relating to Carmina and her guardian.

'It may not be amiss,' he began, 'to mention, in the first place, that the fortune left to Miss Carmina amounts, in round numbers, to one hundred and thirty thousand pounds. The Trustees——'

'Skip the Trustees,' said Mrs. Gallilee.

Mr. Mool skipped.

'In the matter of the guardian,' he said, 'there is a preliminary clause, in the event of your death or refusal to act, appointing Lady Northlake——'

'Skip Lady Northlake,' said Mrs. Gallilee.

Mr. Mool skipped.

'You are appointed Miss Carmina's guardian, until she comes of age,' he resumed. 'If she marries in that interval——'

He paused to turn over a page. Not only Mrs. Gallilee, but Ovid also, now listened with the deepest interest.

'If she marries in that interval, with her guardian's approval——'

'Suppose I don't approve of her choice?' Mrs. Gallilee interposed.

Ovid looked at his mother—and quickly looked away again. The restless little terrier caught his eye, and jumped up to be patted. Ovid was too pre-occupied to notice this

modest advance. The dog's eyes and ears expressed reproachful surprise. His friend Ovid had treated him rudely for the first time in his life.

'If the young lady contracts a matrimonial engagement of which you disapprove,' Mr. Mool answered, 'you are instructed by the testator to assert your reasons in the presence of—well, I may describe it, as a family council; composed of Mr. Gallilee, and of Lord and Lady Northlake.'

'Excessively foolish of Robert,' Mrs. Gallilee remarked. 'And what, Mr. Mool, is this meddling council of three to do?'

'A majority of the council, Mrs. Gallilee, is to decide the question absolutely. If the decision confirms your view, and if Miss Carmina still persists in her resolution notwithstanding——'

'Am I to give way?' Mrs. Gallilee asked.

'Not until your niece comes of age, ma'am. Then, she decides for herself.'

'And inherits the fortune?'

'Only an income from part of it—if her marriage is disapproved by her guardian and her relatives.'

'And what becomes of the rest?'

'The whole of it,' said Mr. Mool, 'will be invested by the Trustees, and will be divided equally, on her death, among her children.'

'Suppose she leaves no children?'

'That case is provided for, ma'am, by the last clause. I will only say now, that you are interested in the result.'

Mrs. Gallilee turned swiftly and sternly to her son. 'When I am dead and gone,' she said, 'I look to you to defend my memory.'

'To defend your memory?' Ovid repeated, wondering what she could possibly mean.

'If I do become interested in the disposal

of Robert's fortune—which God forbid!—can't you foresee what will happen?' his mother inquired bitterly. 'Lady Northlake will say, "Maria intrigued for this!"'

Mr. Mool looked doubtfully at the ferns. No! His vegetable allies were not strong enough to check any further outpouring of such family feeling as this. Nothing was to be trusted, in the present emergency, but the superior authority of the Will.

'Pardon me,' he said; 'there are some further instructions, Mrs. Gallilee, which, as I venture to think, exhibit your late brother's well-known liberality of feeling in a very interesting light. They relate to the provision made for his daughter, while she is residing under your roof. Miss Carmina is to have the services of the best masters, in finishing her education.'

'Certainly!' cried Mrs. Gallilee, with the utmost fervour.

'And the use of a carriage to herself, whenever she may require it.'

'No, Mr. Mool! *Two* carriages—in such a climate as this. One open, and one closed.'

'And to defray these and other expenses, the Trustees are authorised to place at your disposal one thousand a year.'

'Too much! too much!'

Mr. Mool might have agreed with her—if he had not known that Robert Graywell had thought of his sister's interests, in making this excessive provision for expenses incurred on his daughter's account.

'Perhaps, her dresses and her pocket money are included?' Mrs. Gallilee resumed.

Mr. Mool smiled, and shook his head. 'Mr. Graywell's generosity has no limits,' he said, 'where his daughter is concerned. Miss Carmina is to have five hundred a year for pocket-money and dresses.'

Mrs. Gallilee appealed to the sympathies of her son. 'Isn't it touching?' she said. 'Dear Carmina! my own people in Paris shall make her dresses. Well, Mr. Mool?'

'Allow me to read the exact language of the Will next,' Mr. Mool answered. '"If her sweet disposition leads her into exceeding her allowance, in the pursuit of her own little charities, my Trustees are hereby authorised, at their own discretion, to increase the amount, within the limit of another five hundred pounds annually." It sounds presumptuous, perhaps, on my part,' said Mr. Mool, venturing on a modest confession of enthusiasm, 'but one can't help thinking, What a good father! what a good child!'

Mrs. Gallilee had another appropriate remark ready on her lips, when the unlucky dog interrupted her once more. He made a sudden rush into the conservatory, barking with all his might. A crashing noise followed the dog's

outbreak, which sounded like the fall of a flower-pot.

Ovid hurried into the conservatory—with the dog ahead of him, tearing down the steps which led into the back garden.

The pot lay broken on the tiled floor. Struck by the beauty of the flower that grew in it, he stooped to set it up again. If, instead of doing this, he had advanced at once to the second door, he would have seen a lady hastening into the house; and, though her back view only was presented, he could hardly have failed to recognise Miss Minerva. As it was, when he reached the door, the garden was empty.

He looked up at the house, and saw Carmina at the open window of her bedroom.

The sad expression on that sweet young face grieved him. Was she thinking of her happy past life? or of the doubtful future, among strangers in a strange country? She noticed Ovid—and her eyes brightened. His

customary coldness with women melted instantly: he kissed his hand to her. She returned the salute (so familiar to her in Italy) with her gentle smile, and looked back into the room. Teresa showed herself at the window. Always following her impulses without troubling herself to think first, the duenna followed them now. 'We are dull up here,' she called out. 'Come back to us, Mr. Ovid.' The words had hardly been spoken before they both turned from the window. Teresa pointed significantly into the room. They disappeared.

Ovid went back to the library.

'Anybody listening?' Mr. Mool inquired.

'I have not discovered anybody, but I doubt if a stray cat could have upset that heavy flower-pot.' He looked round him as he made the reply. 'Where is my mother?' he asked.

Mrs. Gallilee had gone upstairs, eager to tell Carmina of the handsome allowance made to her by her father. Having answered in these

terms, Mr Mool began to fold up the Will—and suddenly stopped.

'Very inconsiderate, on my part,' he said; 'I forgot, Mr. Ovid, that you haven't heard the end of it. Let me give you a brief abstract. You know, perhaps, that Miss Carmina is a Catholic? Very natural—her poor mother's religion. Well, sir, her good father forgets nothing. All attempts at proselytising are strictly forbidden.'

Ovid smiled. His mother's religious convictions began and ended with the inorganic matter of the earth.

'The last clause,' Mr. Mool proceeded, 'seemed to agitate Mrs. Gallilee quite painfully. I reminded her that her brother had no near relations living, but Lady Northlake and herself. As to leaving money to my lady, in my lord's princely position——'

'Pardon me,' Ovid interposed, 'what is there to agitate my mother in this?'

Mr. Mool made his apologies for not getting sooner to the point, with the readiest good-will. 'Professional habit, Mr. Ovid,' he explained. 'We are apt to be wordy—paid, in fact, at so much a folio, for so many words!—and we like to clear the ground first. Your late uncle ends his Will, by providing for the disposal of his fortune, in two possible events, as follows: Miss Carmina may die unmarried, or Miss Carmina (being married) may die without offspring.'

Seeing the importance of the last clause now, Ovid stopped him again. 'Do I remember the amount of the fortune correctly?' he asked. 'Was it a hundred and thirty thousand pounds?'

'Yes.'

'And what becomes of all that money, if Carmina never marries, or if she leaves no children?'

'In either of those cases, sir, the whole of the money goes to Mrs. Gallilee and her daughters.'

CHAPTER IX.

TIME had advanced to midnight, after the reading of the Will—and Ovid was at home.

The silence of the quiet street in which he lived was only disturbed by the occasional rolling of carriage wheels, and by dance-music from the house of one of his neighbours who was giving a ball. He sat at his writing-table, thinking. Honest self-examination had laid out the state of his mind before him like a map, and had shown him, in its true proportions, the new interest that filled his life.

Of that interest he was now the willing slave. If he had not known his mother to be with her, he would have gone back to Carmina when the lawyer left the house. As it was, he

had sent a message upstairs, inviting himself to dinner, solely for the purpose of seeing Carmina again—and he had been bitterly disappointed when he heard that Mr. and Mrs. Gallilee were engaged, and that his cousin would take tea in her room. He had eaten something at his club, without caring what it was. He had gone to the Opera afterwards, merely because his recollections of a favourite singing-lady of that season vaguely reminded him of Carmina. And there he was, at midnight, on his return from the music, eager for the next opportunity of seeing his cousin, a few hours hence—when he had arranged to say good-bye at the family breakfast-table.

To feel this change in him as vividly as he felt it, could lead to but one conclusion in the mind of a man who was incapable of purposely deceiving himself. He was as certain as ever of the importance of rest and change, in the broken state of his health. And yet, in the face of that

conviction, his contemplated sea-voyage had already become one of the vanished illusions of his life!

His friend had arranged to travel with him, that morning, from London to the port at which the yacht was waiting for them. They were hardly intimate enough to trust each other unreservedly with secrets. The customary apology for breaking an engagement was the alternative that remained. With the paper on his desk and with the words on his mind, he was yet in such a strange state of indecision that he hesitated to write the letter!

His morbidly-sensitive nerves were sadly shaken. Even the familiar record of the half-hour by the hall clock startled him. The stroke of the bell was succeeded by a mild and mournful sound outside the door—the mewing of a cat.

He rose, without any appearance of surprise, and opened the door.

With grace and dignity entered a small black female cat; exhibiting, by way of variety of colour, a melancholy triangular patch of white over the lower part of her face, and four brilliantly clean white paws. Ovid went back to his desk. As soon as he was in his chair again, the cat jumped on his shoulder, and sat there purring in his ear. This was the place she occupied, whenever her master was writing alone. Passing one day through a surburban neighbourhood, on his round of visits, the young surgeon had been attracted by a crowd in a by-street. He had rescued his present companion from starvation in a locked-up house, the barbarous inhabitants of which had gone away for a holiday, and had forgotten the cat. When Ovid took the poor creature home with him in his carriage, popular feeling decided that the unknown gentleman was 'a rum 'un.' From that moment, this fortunate little member of a brutally-slandered race

attached herself to her new friend, and to that friend only. If Ovid had owned the truth, he must have acknowledged that her company was a relief to him, in the present state of his mind.

When a man's flagging purpose is in want of a stimulant, the most trifling change in the circumstances of the moment often applies the animating influence. Even such a small interruption as the appearance of his cat rendered this service to Ovid. To use the common and expressive phrase, it had 'shaken him up.' He wrote the letter—and his patient companion killed the time by washing her face.

His mind being so far relieved, he went to bed—the cat following him upstairs to *her* bed in a corner of the room. Clothes are unwholesome superfluities not contemplated in the system of Nature. When we are exhausted, there is no such thing as true repose for us until we are freed from our dress. Men subjected to any excessive exertion—fighting,

rowing, walking, working—must strip their bodies as completely as possible, or they are not equal to the call on them. Ovid's knowledge of his own temperament told him that sleep was not to be hoped for, that night. But the way to bed was the way to rest notwithstanding, by getting rid of his clothes.

With the sunrise he rose and went out.

He took his letter with him, and dropped it into the box in his friend's door. The sooner he committed himself to the new course that he had taken, the more certain he might feel of not renewing the miserable and useless indecision of the past night. 'Thank God, that's done!' he said to himself, as he heard the letter fall into the box, and left the house.

After walking in the Park until he was weary, he sat down by the ornamental lake, and watched the waterfowl enjoying their happy lives.

Wherever he went, whatever he did, Car-

mina was always with him. He had seen thousands of girls, whose personal attractions were far more remarkable—and some few among them whose manner was perhaps equally winning. What was the charm in the little half-foreign cousin that had seized on him in an instant, and that seemed to fasten its subtle hold more and more irresistibly with every minute of his life? He was content to feel the charm without caring to fathom it. The lovely morning light took him in imagination to her bedside; he saw her sleeping peacefully in her new room. Would the time come when she might dream of him? He looked at his watch. It was seven o'clock. The breakfast-hour at Fairfield Gardens had been fixed for eight, to give him time to catch the morning train. Half an hour might be occupied in walking back to his own house. Add ten minutes to make some change in his dress—and he might set forth for his next meeting with Carmina.

No uneasy anticipation of what the family circle might think of his sudden change of plan troubled his mind. A very different question occupied him. For the first time in his life, he wondered what dress a woman would wear at breakfast time.

He opened his house door with his own key. An elderly person, in a coarse black gown, was seated on the bench in the hall. She rose, and advanced towards him. In speechless astonishment, he confronted Carmina's faithful companion—Teresa.

'If you please, I want to speak to you,' she said, in her best English.

Ovid took her into his consulting-room. She wasted no time in apologies or explanations. 'Don't speak!' she broke out. 'Carmina has had a bad night.'

'I shall be at the house in half an hour!' Ovid eagerly assured her.

The duenna shook her forefinger impatiently.

'She doesn't want a doctor. She wants a friend, when I am gone. What is her life here? A new life, among new people. Don't speak! She's frightened and miserable. So young, so shy, so easily startled. And I must leave her—I must! I must! My old man is failing fast; he may die, without a creature to comfort him, if I don't go back. I could tear my hair when I think of it. Don't speak! It's *my* business to speak. Ha! I know, what I know. Young doctor, you're in love with Carmina! I've read you like a book. You're quick to see, sudden to feel—like one of my people. *Be* one of my people. Help me.'

She dragged a chair close to Ovid, and laid her hand suddenly and heavily on his arm.

'It's not my fault, mind; *I* have said nothing to disturb her. No! I've made the best of it. I've lied to her. What do I care? I would lie like Judas Iscariot himself to spare Carmina a moment's pain. It's such a new life

for her—try to see it for yourself—such a new life. You and I shook hands yesterday. Do it again. Are you surprised to see me? I asked your mother's servants where you lived; and here I am—with the cruel teeth of anxiety gnawing me alive when I think of the time to come. Oh, my lamb! my angel! she's alone. Oh, my God, only seventeen years old, and alone in the world! No father, no mother; and soon—oh, too soon, too soon—not even Teresa! What are you looking at? What is there so wonderful in the tears of a stupid old fool? Drops of hot water. Ha! ha! if they fall on your fine carpet here, they won't hurt it. You're a good fellow; you're a dear fellow. Hush! I know the Evil Eye when I see it. No more of that! A secret in your ear—I've said a word for you to Carmina already. Give her time; she's not cold; young and innocent, that's all. Love will come—I know, what I know—love will come.'

She laughed—and, in the very act of laughing, changed again. Fright looked wildly at Ovid out of her staring eyes. Some terrifying remembrance had suddenly occurred to her. She sprang to her feet.

'You said you were going away,' she cried. 'You said it, when you left us yesterday. It can't be! it shan't be! *You're* not going to leave Carmina, too?'

Ovid's first impulse was to tell the whole truth. He resisted the impulse. To own that Carmina was the cause of his abandonment of the sea-voyage, before she was even sure of the impression she had produced on him, would be to place himself in a position from which his self-respect recoiled. 'My plans are changed,' was all he said to Teresa. 'Make your mind easy; I'm not going away.'

The strange old creature snapped her fingers joyously. 'Good-bye! I want no more of you.' With those cool and candid words of

farewell, she advanced to the door—stopped suddenly to think—and came back. Only a moment had passed, and she was as sternly in earnest again as ever.

'May I call you by your name?' she asked.

'Certainly!'

'Listen, Ovid! I may not see you again before I go back to my husband. This is my last word—never forget it. Even Carmina may have enemies!'

What could she be thinking of? 'Enemies—in my mother's house!' Ovid exclaimed. 'What can you possibly mean?'

Teresa returned to the door, and only answered him when she had opened it to go.

'The Evil Eye never lies,' she said. 'Wait—and you will see.'

CHAPTER X.

MRS. GALLILEE was on her way to the breakfast-room, when her son entered the house. They met in the hall. 'Is your packing done?' she asked.

He was in no humour to wait, and make his confession at that moment. 'Not yet,' was his only reply.

Mrs. Gallilee led the way into the room. 'Ovid's luggage is not ready yet,' she announced; 'I believe he will lose his train.'

They were all at the breakfast table, the children and the governess included. Carmina's worn face, telling its tale of a wakeful night, brightened again, as it had brightened at the bedroom window, when she saw Ovid.

She took his hand frankly, and made light of her weary looks. 'No, my cousin,' she said, playfully; 'I mean to be worthier of my pretty bed to-night; I am not going to be your patient yet.' Mr. Gallilee (with his mouth full at the moment) offered good advice. 'Eat and drink as I do, my dear,' he said to Carmina; 'and you will sleep as I do. Off I go when the light's out—flat on my back, as Mrs. Gallilee will tell you—and wake me if you can, till it's time to get up. Have some buttered eggs, Ovid. They're good, ain't they, Zo?' Zo looked up from her plate, and agreed with her father, in one emphatic word, 'Jolly!' Miss Minerva, queen of governesses, instantly did her duty. 'Zoe! how often must I tell you not to talk slang? Do you ever hear your sister say "Jolly?"' That highly-cultivated child, Maria, strong in conscious virtue, added her authority in support of the protest. 'No young lady who respects herself, Zoe, will ever

talk slang.' Mr. Gallilee was unworthy of such a daughter. He muttered under his breath, 'Oh, bother!' Zo held out her plate for more. Mr. Gallilee was delighted. 'My child all over!' he exclaimed. 'We are both of us good feeders. Zo will grow up a fine woman.' He appealed to his stepson to agree with him. 'That's your medical opinion, Ovid, isn't it?'

Carmina's pretty smile passed like rippling light over her eyes and her lips. In her brief experience of England, Mr. Gallilee was the one exhilarating element in family life.

Mrs. Gallilee's mind still dwelt on her son's luggage, and on the rigorous punctuality of railway arrangements.

'What is your servant about?' she said to Ovid. 'It's his business to see that you are ready in time.'

It was useless to allow the false impression that prevailed to continue any longer. Ovid

set them all right, in the plainest and fewest words.

'My servant is not to blame,' he said. 'I have written an apology to my friend—I am not going away.'

For the moment, this astounding announcement was received in silent dismay—excepting the youngest member of the company. After her father, Ovid was the one other person in the world who held a place in Zo's odd little heart. *Her* sentiments were now expressed without hesitation and without reserve. She put down her spoon, and she cried, 'Hooray!' Another exhibition of vulgarity. But even Miss Minerva was too completely preoccupied by the revelation which had burst on the family to administer the necessary reproof. Her eager eyes were rivetted on Ovid. As for Mr. Gallilee, he held his bread and butter suspended in mid-air, and stared open-mouthed at his stepson, in helpless consternation.

Mrs. Gallilee always set the right example. Mrs. Gallilee was the first to demand an explanation.

'What does this extraordinary proceeding mean?' she asked.

Ovid was impenetrable to the tone in which that question was put. He had looked at his cousin, when he declared his change of plan—and he was looking at her still. Whatever the feeling of the moment might be, Carmina's sensitive face expressed it vividly. Who could mistake the faintly-rising colour in her cheeks, the sweet quickening of light in her eyes, when she met Ovid's look? Still hardly capable of estimating the influence that she exercised over him, her sense of the interest taken in her by Ovid was the proud sense that makes girls innocently bold. Whatever the others might think of his broken engagement, her artless eyes said plainly, 'My feeling is happy surprise.'

Mrs. Gallilee summoned her son to attend her, in no friendly voice. She, too, had looked at Carmina—and had registered the result of her observation privately.

'Are we to hear your reasons?' she inquired.

Ovid had made the one discovery in the world, on which his whole heart was set. He was so happy, that he kept his mother out of his secret, with a masterly composure worthy of herself.

'I don't think a sea-voyage is the right thing for me,' he answered.

'Rather a sudden change of opinion,' Mrs. Gallilee remarked.

Ovid coolly agreed with her. It *was* rather sudden, he said.

The governess still looked at him, wondering whether he would provoke an outbreak.

After a little pause, Mrs. Gallilee accepted her son's short answer—with a sudden submis-

sion which had a meaning of its own. She offered Ovid another cup of tea; and, more remarkable yet, she turned to her eldest daughter, and deliberately changed the subject. 'What are your lessons, my dear, to-day?' she asked, with bland maternal interest.

By this time, bewildered Mr. Gallilee had finished his bread and butter. 'Ovid knows best, my dear,' he said cheerfully to his wife. Mrs. Gallilee's sudden recovery of her temper did not include her husband. If a look could have annihilated that worthy man, his corporal presence must have vanished into air, when he had delivered himself of his opinion. As it was, he only helped Zo to another spoonful of jam. 'When Ovid first thought of that voyage,' he went on, 'I said, Suppose he's sick? A dreadful sensation isn't it, Miss Minerva? First you seem to sink into your shoes, and then it all comes up—eh? You're *not* sick at sea? I congratulate you! I most

sincerely congratulate you! My dear Ovid, come and dine with me to-night at the club.' He looked doubtfully at his wife, as he made that proposal. 'Got the headache, my dear? I'll take you out with pleasure for a walk. What's the matter with her, Miss Minerva? Oh, I see! Hush! Maria's going to say grace.——Amen! Amen!'

They all rose from the table.

Mr. Gallilee was the first to open the door. The smoking-room at Fairfield Gardens was over the kitchen; he preferred enjoying his cigar in the garden of the Square. He looked at Carmina and Ovid, as if he wanted one of them to accompany him. They were both at the aviary, admiring the birds, and absorbed in their own talk. Mr. Gallilee resigned himself to his fate; appealing, on his way out, to somebody to agree with him as usual. 'Well!' he said with a little sigh, 'a cigar keeps one company.' Miss Minerva (absorbed in her own

thoughts) passed near him, on her way to the school-room with her pupils. 'You would find it so yourself, Miss Minerva—that is to say, if you smoked, which of course you don't. Be a good girl, Zo; attend to your lessons.'

Zo's perversity in the matter of lessons put its own crooked construction on this excellent advice. She answered in a whisper, 'Give us a holiday.'

The passing aspirations of idle minds, being subject to the law of chances, are sometimes fulfilled, and so exhibit poor human wishes in a consolatory light. Thanks to the conversation between Carmina and Ovid, Zo got her holiday after all.

Mrs. Gallilee, still as amiable as ever, had joined her son and her niece at the aviary. Ovid said to his mother, 'Carmina is fond of birds. I have been telling her she may see all the races of birds assembled in the Zoological

Gardens. It's a perfect day. Why shouldn't we go?'

The stupidest woman living would have understood what this proposal really meant. Mrs. Gallilee sanctioned it as composedly as if Ovid and Carmina had been brother and sister. 'I wish I could go with you,' she said, 'but my household affairs fill my morning. And there is a lecture this afternoon, which I cannot possibly lose. I don't know, Carmina, whether you are interested in these things. We are to have the apparatus, which illustrates the conversion of radiant energy into sonorous vibrations. Have you ever heard, my dear, of the Diathermancy of Ebonite? Not in your way, perhaps?'

Carmina looked as unintelligent as Zo herself. Mrs. Gallilee's science seemed to frighten her. The Diathermancy of Ebonite, by some incomprehensible process, drove her bewildered mind back on her old companion

'I want to give Teresa a little pleasure before we part,' she said timidly; 'may she go with us?'

'Of course!' cried Mrs. Gallilee. 'And, now I think of it, why shouldn't the children have a little pleasure too? I will give them a holiday. Don't be alarmed, Ovid; Miss Minerva will look after them. In the meantime, Carmina, tell your good old friend to get ready.'

Carmina hastened away, and so helped Mrs. Gallilee to the immediate object which she had in view—a private interview with her son.

Ovid anticipated a searching inquiry into the motives which had led him to give up the sea voyage. His mother was far too clever a woman to waste her time in that way. Her first words told him that his motive was as plainly revealed to her as the sunlight shining in at the window.

'That's a charming girl,' she said, when Carmina closed the door behind her. 'Modest and natural—quite the sort of girl, Ovid, to attract a clever man like you.'

Ovid was completely taken by surprise, and owned it by his silence. Mrs. Gallilee went on in a tone of innocent maternal pleasantry.

'You know you began young,' she said; 'your first love was that poor little wizen girl of Lady Northlake's who died. Child's play, you will tell me, and nothing more. But, my dear, I am afraid I shall require some persuasion, before I quite sympathise with this new —what shall I call it?—infatuation is too hard a word, and "fancy" means nothing. We will leave it a blank. Marriages of cousins are debatable marriages, to say the least of them; and Protestant fathers and Papist mothers do occasionally involve difficulties with children. Not that I say, No. Far from it. But if this is to go on, I do hesitate.'

Something in his mother's tone grated on Ovid's sensibilities. 'I don't at all follow you,' he said, rather sharply; 'you are looking a little too far into the future.'

'Then we will return to the present,' Mrs. Gallilee replied—still with the readiest submission to the humour of her son.

On recent occasions, she had expressed the opinion that Ovid would do wisely—at his age, and with his professional prospects—to wait a few years before he thought of marrying. Having said enough in praise of her niece to satisfy him for the time being (without appearing to be meanly influenced, in modifying her opinion, by the question of money), her next object was to induce him to leave England immediately, for the recovery of his health. With Ovid absent, and with Carmina under her sole superintendence, Mrs. Gallilee could see her way to her own private ends.

'Really,' she resumed, 'you ought to think

seriously of change of air and scene. You know you would not allow a patient, in your present state of health, to trifle with himself as you are trifling now. If you don't like the sea, try the Continent. Get away somewhere, my dear, for your own sake.'

It was only possible to answer this, in one way. Ovid owned that his mother was right, and asked for time to think. To his infinite relief, he was interrupted by a knock at the door. Miss Minerva entered the room—not in a very amiable temper, judging by appearances.

'I am afraid I disturb you,' she began.

Ovid seized the opportunity of retreat. He had some letters to write—he hurried away to the library.

'Is there any mistake?' the governess asked, when she and Mrs. Gallilee were alone.

'In what respect, Miss Minerva?'

'I met your niece, ma'am, on the stairs.

She says you wish the children to have a holiday.'

'Yes, to go with my son and Miss Carmina to the Zoological Gardens.'

'Miss Carmina said I was to go too.'

'Miss Carmina was perfectly right.'

The governess fixed her searching eyes on Mrs. Gallilee. 'You really wish me to go with them?' she said.

'I do.'

'I know why.'

In the course of their experience, Mrs. Gallilee and Miss Minerva had once quarrelled fiercely—and Mrs. Gallilee had got the worst of it. She learnt her lesson. For the future she knew how to deal with her governess. When one said, 'I know why,' the other only answered, 'Do you?'

'Let's have it out plainly, ma'am,' Miss Minerva proceeded. 'I am not to let Mr. Ovid' (she laid a bitterly strong emphasis on

the name, and flushed angrily)—'I am not to let Mr. Ovid and Miss Carmina be alone together.'

'You are a good guesser,' Mrs. Gallilee remarked quietly.

'No,' said Miss Minerva more quietly still; 'I have only seen what you have seen.'

'Did I tell you what I have seen?'

'Quite needless, ma'am. Your son is in love with his cousin. When am I to be ready?'

The bland mistress mentioned the hour. The rude governess left the room.

Mrs. Gallilee looked at the closing door with a curious smile. She had already suspected Miss Minerva of being crossed in love. The suspicion was now confirmed, and the man was discovered.

'Soured by a hopeless passion,' she said to herself. 'And the object is—my son.'

CHAPTER XI.

On entering the Zoological Gardens, Ovid turned at once to the right, leading Carmina to the aviaries, so that she might begin by seeing the birds. Miss Minerva, with Maria in dutiful attendance, followed them. Teresa kept at a little distance behind; and Zo took her own erratic course, now attaching herself to one member of the little party, and now to another.

When they reached the aviaries the order of march became confused; differences in the birds made their appeal to differences in the taste of the visitors. Insatiably eager for useful information, that prize-pupil Maria held her governess captive at one cage; while Zo

darted away towards another, out of reach of discipline, and good Teresa volunteered to bring her back. For a minute, Ovid and his cousin were left alone. He might have taken a lover's advantage even of that small opportunity. But Carmina had something to say to him—and Carmina spoke first.

'Has Miss Minerva been your mother's governess for a long time?' she inquired.

'For some years,' Ovid replied. 'Will you let me put a question on my side? Why do you ask?'

Carmina hesitated—and answered in a whisper, 'She looks ill-tempered.'

'She *is* ill-tempered,' Ovid confessed. 'I suspect,' he added with a smile, 'you don't like Miss Minerva.'

Carmina attempted no denial; her excuse was a woman's excuse all over: 'She doesn't like *me*.'

'How do you know?'

'I have been looking at her. Does she beat the children?'

'My dear Carmina! do you think she would be my mother's governess if she treated the children in that way? Besides, Miss Minerva is too well-bred a woman to degrade herself by acts of violence. Family misfortunes have very materially lowered her position in the world.'

He was reminded, as he said those words, of the time when Miss Minerva had entered on her present employment, and when she had been the object of some little curiosity on his own part. Mrs. Gallilee's answer, when he once asked why she kept such an irritable woman in the house, had been entirely satisfactory, so far as she herself was concerned: 'Miss Minerva is remarkably well informed, and I get her cheap.' Exactly like his mother! But it left Miss Minerva's motives involved in utter obscurity. Why had this highly cultivated

woman accepted an inadequate reward for her services, for years together? Why—to take the event of that morning as another example—after plainly showing her temper to her employer, had she been so ready to submit to a suddenly decreed holiday, which disarranged her whole course of lessons for the week? Little did Ovid think that the one reconciling influence which adjusted these contradictions, and set at rest every doubt that grew out of them, was to be found in himself. Even the humiliation of watching him in his mother's interest, and of witnessing his devotion to another woman, was a sacrifice which Miss Minerva could endure for the one inestimable privilege of being in Ovid's company.

Before Carmina could ask any more questions a shrill voice, at its highest pitch of excitement, called her away. Zo had just discovered the most amusing bird in the Gardens—the low comedian of the feathered

race — otherwise known as the Piping Crow.

Carmina hurried to the cage as if she had been a child herself. Seeing Ovid left alone, the governess seized *her* chance of speaking to him. The first words that passed her lips told their own story. While Carmina had been studying Miss Minerva, Miss Minerva had been studying Carmina. Already, the same instinctive sense of rivalry had associated, on a common ground of feeling, the two most dissimilar women that ever breathed the breath of life.

'Does your cousin know much about birds?' Miss Minerva began.

The opinion which declares that vanity is a failing peculiar to the sex is a slander on women. All the world over, there are more vain men in it than vain women. If Ovid had not been one of the exceptions to a general rule among men, or even if his experience of the natures of women had been a little less

limited, he too might have discovered Miss Minerva's secret. Even her capacity for self-control failed, at the moment when she took Carmina's place. Those keen black eyes, so hard and cold when they looked at anyone else —flamed with an all-devouring sense of possession when they first rested on Ovid. 'He's mine. For one golden moment he's mine!' They spoke—and, suddenly, the every-day blind was drawn down again; there was nobody present but a well-bred woman, talking with delicately implied deference to a distinguished man.

'So far, we have not spoken of the birds,' Ovid innocently answered.

'And yet you seemed to be both looking at them!' She at once covered this unwary outbreak of jealousy under an impervious surface of compliment. 'Miss Carmina is not perhaps exactly pretty, but she is a singularly interesting girl.'

Ovid cordially (too cordially) agreed. Miss Minerva had presented her better self to him under a most agreeable aspect. She tried—struggled—fought with herself—to preserve appearances. The demon in her got possession again of her tongue. 'Do you find the young lady intelligent?' she inquired.

'Certainly!'

Only one word—spoken perhaps a little sharply. The miserable woman shrank under it. 'An idle question on my part,' she said, with the pathetic humility that tries to be cheerful. 'And another warning, Mr. Vere, never to judge by appearances.' She looked at him, and returned to the children.

Ovid's eyes followed her compassionately. 'Poor wretch!' he thought. 'What an infernal temper, and how hard she tries to control it!' He joined Carmina, with a new delight in being near her again. Zo was still in ecstasies over the Piping Crow. 'Oh, the

jolly little chap! Look how he cocks his head! He mocks me when I whistle. Buy him,' cried Zo, tugging at Ovid's coat tails in the excitement that possessed her; 'buy him, and let me take him home with me!'

Some visitors within hearing began to laugh. Miss Minerva opened her lips; Maria opened her lips. To the astonishment of both of them the coming rebuke proved to be needless.

A sudden transformation to silence and docility had made a new creature of Zo, before they could speak—and Ovid had unconsciously worked the miracle. For the first time in the child's experience, he had suffered his coat tails to be pulled without immediately attending to her. Who was he looking at? It was only too easy to see that Carmina had got him all to herself. The jealous little heart swelled in Zo's bosom. In silent perplexity she kept watch on the friend who had never disappointed her

before. Little by little, her slow intelligence began to realise the discovery of something in his face which made him look handsomer than ever, and which she had never seen in it yet. They all left the aviaries, and turned to the railed paddocks in which the larger birds were assembled. And still Zo followed so quietly, so silently, that her elder sister—threatened with a rival in good behaviour — looked at her in undisguised alarm.

Incited by Maria (who felt the necessity of vindicating her character) Miss Minerva began a dissertation on cranes, suggested by the birds with the brittle-looking legs hopping up to her in expectation of something to eat. Ovid was absorbed in attending to his cousin; he had provided himself with some bread, and was helping Carmina to feed the birds. But one person noticed Zo, now that her strange lapse into good behaviour had lost the charm of novelty. Old Teresa watched her. There

was something plainly troubling the child in secret; she had a mind to know what it might be.

Zo approached Ovid again, determined to understand the change in him if perseverance could do it. He was talking so confidentially to Carmina, that he almost whispered in her ear. Zo eyed him, without daring to touch his coat tails again. Miss Minerva tried hard to go on composedly with the dissertation on cranes. 'Flocks of these birds, Maria, pass periodically over the southern and central countries of Europe'——Her breath failed her, as she looked at Ovid: she could say no more. Zo stopped those maddening confidences; Zo, in desperate want of information, tugged boldly at Carmina's skirts this time.

The young girl turned round directly. 'What is it, dear?'

With big tears of indignation rising in her eyes, Zo pointed to Ovid. 'I say!' she

whispered, 'is he going to buy the Piping Crow for *you*?'

To Zo's discomfiture they both smiled. She dried her eyes with her fists, and waited doggedly for an answer. Carmina set the child's mind at ease very prettily and kindly; and Ovid added the pacifying influence of a familiar pat on her cheek. Noticed at last, and satisfied that the bird was not to be bought for anybody, Zo's sense of injury was appeased; her jealousy melted away as the next result. After a pause—produced, as her next words implied, by an effort of memory—she suddenly took Carmina into her confidence.

'Don't tell!' she began. 'I saw another man look like Ovid.'

'When, dear?' Carmina asked—meaning, at what past date.

'When his face was close to yours,' Zo answered—meaning, under what recent circumstances.

Ovid, hearing this reply, knew his small sister well enough to foresee embarrassing results if he allowed the conversation to proceed. He took Carmina's arm, and led her a little farther on.

Miss Minerva obstinately followed them, with Maria in attendance, still imperfectly enlightened on the migration of cranes. Zo looked round, in search of another audience. Teresa had been listening; she was present, waiting for events. Being herself what stupid people call 'an oddity,' her sympathies were attracted by this quaint child. In Teresa's opinion, seeing the animals was very inferior, as an amusement, to exploring Zo's mind. She produced a cake of chocolate, from a travelling bag which she carried with her everywhere. The cake was sweet, it was flavoured with vanilla, and it was offered to Zo, unembittered by advice not to be greedy and make herself ill. Staring hard at Teresa, she took an experimental bite. The

wily duenna chose that propitious moment to present herself in the capacity of a new audience.

'Who was that other man you saw, who looked like Mr. Ovid?' she asked; speaking in the tone of serious equality which is always flattering to the self-esteem of children in intercourse with their elders. Zo was so proud of having her own talk reported by a grown-up stranger, that she even forgot the chocolate. 'I wanted to say more than that,' she announced. 'Would you like to hear the end of it?' And this admirable foreign person answered, 'I should very much like.'

Zo hesitated. To follow out its own little train of thought, in words, was no easy task to the immature mind which Miss Minerva had so mercilessly overworked. Led by old Dame Nature (first of governesses!) Zo found her way out of the labyrinth by means of questions.

'Do you know Joseph?' she began.

Teresa had heard the footman called by his name: she knew who Joseph was.

'Do you know Matilda?' Zo proceeded.

Teresa had heard the housemaid called by her name: she knew who Matilda was. And better still, she helped her little friend by a timely guess at what was coming, presented under the form of a reminder. 'You saw Mr. Ovid's face close to Carmina's face,' she suggested.

Zo nodded furiously—the end of it was coming already.

'And before that,' Teresa went on, 'you saw Joseph's face close to Matilda's face.'

'I saw Joseph kiss Matilda!' Zo burst out, with a scream of triumph. 'Why doesn't Ovid kiss Carmina?'

A deep bass voice, behind them, answered gravely: 'Because the governess is in the way.' And a big bamboo walking-stick pointed over

their heads at Miss Minerva. Zo instantly recognised the stick, and took it into her own hands.

Teresa turned—and found herself in the presence of a remarkable man.

CHAPTER XII.

In the first place, the stranger was almost tall enough to be shown as a giant; he towered to a stature of six feet six inches, English measure. If his immense bones had been properly covered with flesh, he might have presented the rare combination of fine proportions with great height. He was so miserably—it might almost be said, so hideously—thin that his enemies spoke of him as 'the living skeleton.' His massive forehead, his great gloomy gray eyes, his protuberant cheek-bones, overhung a fleshless lower face naked of beard, whiskers, and moustache. His complexion added to the startling effect which his personal appearance produced on strangers. It was of the true

gipsy-brown, and, being darker in tone than his eyes, added remarkably to the weird look, the dismal thoughtful scrutiny, which it was his habit to fix on persons talking with him, no matter whether they were worthy of attention or not. His straight black hair hung as gracelessly on either side of his hollow face as the hair of an American Indian. His great dusky hands, never covered by gloves in the summer time, showed amber-coloured nails on bluntly-pointed fingers, turned up at the tips. Those tips felt like satin when they touched you. When he wished to be careful, he could handle the frailest objects with the most exquisite delicacy. His dress was of the recklessly loose and easy kind. His long frock-coat descended below his knees; his flowing trousers were veritable bags; his lean and wrinkled throat turned about in a widely-opened shirt-collar, unconfined by any sort of neck-tie. He had a theory that a head-dress should be solid enough to resist a chance

blow—a fall from a horse, or the dropping of a loose brick from a house under repair. His hard black hat, broad and curly at the brim, might have graced the head of a bishop, if it had not been secularised by a queer resemblance to the bell-shaped hat worn by dandies in the early years of the present century. In one word he was, both in himself and in his dress, the sort of man whom no stranger is careless enough to pass without turning round for a second look. Teresa, eyeing him with reluctant curiosity, drew back a step, and privately reviled him (in the secrecy of her own language) as an ugly beast! Even his name startled people by the outlandish sound of it. Those enemies who called him 'the living skeleton' said it revealed his gipsy origin. In medical and scientific circles he was well and widely known as—Doctor Benjulia.

Zo ran away with his bamboo stick. After a passing look of gloomy indifference at the

duenna, he called to the child to come back.

She obeyed him in an oddly indirect way, as if she had been returning against her will. At the same time she looked up in his face, with an absence of shyness which showed, like the snatching away of his stick, that she was familiarly acquainted with him, and accustomed to take liberties. And yet there was an expression of uneasy expectation in her round attentive eyes. 'Do you want it back again?' she asked, offering the stick.

'Of course I do. What would your mother say to me, if you tumbled over my big bamboo, and dashed out your brains on this hard gravel walk?'

'Have you been to see Mama?' Zo asked.

'I have *not* been to see Mama—but I know what she would say to me if you dashed out your brains, for all that.'

'What would she say?'

'She would say—Doctor Benjulia, your name ought to be Herod.'

'Who was Herod?'

'Herod was a Royal Jew, who killed little girls when they took away his walking-stick. Come here, child. Shall I tickle you?'

'I knew you'd say that,' Zo answered.

When men in general thoroughly enjoy the pleasure of talking nonsense to children, they can no more help smiling than they can help breathing. The doctor was an extraordinary exception to this rule; his grim face never relaxed—not even when Zo reminded him that one of his favourite recreations was tickling her. She obeyed, however, with the curious appearance of reluctant submission showing itself once more. He put two of his soft big finger-tips on her spine, just below the back of her neck, and pressed on the place. Zo started and wriggled under his touch. He observed her with as serious an interest as if he had been

conducting a medical experiment. 'That's how you make our dog kick with his leg,' said Zo, recalling her experience of the doctor in the society of the dog. 'How do you do it?'

'I touch the Cervical Plexus,' Doctor Benjulia answered as gravely as ever.

This attempt at mystifying the child failed completely. Zo considered the unknown tongue in which he had answered her as being equivalent to lessons. She declined to notice the Cervical Plexus, and returned to the little terrier at home. 'Do you think the dog likes it?' she asked.

'Never mind the dog. Do *you* like it?

'I don't know.'

Doctor Benjulia turned to Teresa. His gloomy gray eyes rested on her, as they might have rested on any inanimate object near him —on the railings that imprisoned the birds, or on the pipes that kept the monkey-house warm.

'I have been playing the fool, ma'am, with this child,' he said; 'and I fear I have detained you. I beg your pardon.' He pulled off his episcopal hat, and walked grimly on, without taking any further notice of Zo.

Teresa made her best courtesy in return. The magnificent civility of the ugly giant daunted, while it flattered her. 'The manners of a prince,' she said, 'and the complexion of a gipsy. Is he a nobleman?'

Zo answered, 'He's a doctor,'—as if that was something much better.

'Do you like him?' Teresa inquired next.

Zo answered the duenna as she had answered the doctor: 'I don't know.'

In the meantime, Ovid and his cousin had not been unobservant of what was passing at a little distance from them. Benjulia's great height, and his evident familiarity with the child, stirred Carmina's curiosity.

Ovid seemed to be disinclined to talk of him.

Miss Minerva made herself useful, with the readiest politeness. She mentioned his odd name, and described him as one of Mrs. Gallilee's old friends. 'Of late years,' she proceeded, 'he is said to have discontinued medical practice, and devoted himself to chemical experiments. Nobody seems to know much about him. He has built a house in a desolate field—in some lost suburban neighbourhood that nobody can discover. In plain English, Dr. Benjulia is a mystery.'

Hearing this, Carmina appealed again to Ovid.

'When I am asked riddles,' she said, 'I am never easy till the answer is guessed for me. And when I hear of mysteries, I am dying to have them revealed. You are a doctor yourself. Do tell me something more!'

Ovid might have evaded her entreaties by means of an excuse. But her eyes were irre-

sistible: they looked him into submission in an instant.

'Doctor Benjulia is what we call a Specialist,' he said. 'I mean that he only professes to treat certain diseases. Brains and nerves are Benjulia's diseases. Without quite discontinuing his medical practice, he limits himself to serious cases—when other doctors are puzzled, you know, and want him to help them. With this exception, he has certainly sacrificed his professional interests to his mania for experiments in chemistry. What those experiments are, nobody knows but himself. He keeps the key of his laboratory about him by day and by night. When the place wants cleaning, he does the cleaning with his own hands.'

Carmina listened with great interest: 'Has nobody peeped in at the windows?' she asked.

'There are no windows—only a skylight in the roof.'

'Can't somebody get up on the roof, and look in through the skylight?'

Ovid laughed. 'One of his men-servants is said to have tried that experiment,' he replied.

'And what did the servant see?'

'A large white blind, drawn under the skylight, and hiding the whole room from view. Somehow, the doctor discovered him—and the man was instantly dismissed. Of course there are reports which explain the mystery of the doctor and his laboratory. One report says that he is trying to find a way of turning common metals into gold. Another declares that he is inventing some explosive compound, so horribly destructive that it will put an end to war. All I can tell you is, that his mind (when I happen to meet him) seems to be as completely absorbed as ever in brains and nerves. But, what they can have to do with chemical experiments, secretly pursued in a

lonely field, is a riddle to which I have thus far found no answer.

'Is he married?' Carmina inquired.

The question seemed to amuse Ovid. 'If Doctor Benjulia had a wife, you think we might get at his secrets? There is no such chance for us—he manages his domestic affairs for himself.'

'Hasn't he even got a housekeeper?'

'Not even a housekeeper!'

While he was making that reply, he saw the doctor slowly advancing towards them. 'Excuse me for one minute,' he resumed; 'I will just speak to him, and come back to you.'

Carmina turned to Miss Minerva in surprise.

'Ovid seems to have some reason for keeping the tall man away from us,' she said. 'Does he dislike Doctor Benjulia?'

But for restraining motives, the governess might have gratified her hatred of Carmina by

a sharp reply. She had her reasons—not only after what she had overheard in the conservatory, but after what she had seen in the Gardens—for winning Carmina's confidence, and exercising over her the influence of a trusted friend. Miss Minerva made instant use of her first opportunity.

'I can tell you what I have noticed myself,' she said confidentially. 'When Mrs. Gallilee gives parties, I am allowed to be present—to see the famous professors of science. On one of these occasions they were talking of instinct and reason. Your cousin, Mr. Ovid Vere, said it was no easy matter to decide where instinct ended and reason began. In his own experience, he had sometimes found people of feeble minds, who judged by instinct, arrive at sounder conclusions than their superiors in intelligence, who judged by reason. The talk took another turn—and, soon after, Doctor Benjulia joined the guests. I don't know

whether you have observed that Mr. Gallilee is very fond of his stepson?'

Oh, yes! Carmina had noticed that. 'I like Mr. Gallilee,' she said warmly; 'he is such a nice, kind-hearted, natural old man.'

Miss Minerva concealed a sneer under a smile. Fond of Mr. Gallilee? what simplicity! 'Well,' she resumed, 'the doctor paid his respects to the master and mistress of the house, and then he shook hands with Mr. Ovid; and then the scientific gentlemen all got round him, and had learned talk. Mr. Gallilee came up to his stepson, looking a little discomposed. He spoke in a whisper—you know his way?—"Ovid, do you like Doctor Benjulia? Don't mention it; I hate him." Strong language for Mr. Gallilee, wasn't it? Mr. Ovid said, "Why do you hate him?" And poor Mr. Gallilee answered like a child, "Because I do." Some ladies came in, and the old gentleman left us to speak to them. I

ventured to say to Mr. Ovid, "Is that instinct or reason?" He took it quite seriously. "Instinct," he said—"and it troubles me." I leave you, Miss Carmina, to draw your own conclusion.'

They both looked up. Ovid and the doctor were walking slowly away from them, and were just passing Teresa and the child. At the same moment, one of the keepers of the animals approached Benjulia. After they had talked together for a while, the man withdrew. Zo (who had heard it all, and had understood a part of it) ran up to Carmina, charged with news.

'There's a sick monkey in the gardens, in a room all by himself!' the child cried. 'And, I say, look there!' She pointed excitedly to Benjulia and Ovid, walking on again slowly in the direction of the aviaries. 'There's the big doctor who tickles me! He says he'll see the poor monkey, as soon as he's done with Ovid.

And what do you think he said besides? He said perhaps he'd take the monkey home with him.'

'I wonder what's the matter with the poor creature?' Carmina asked.

'After what Mr. Ovid has told us, I think I know,' Miss Minerva answered. 'Doctor Benjulia wouldn't be interested in the monkey unless it had a disease of the brain.'

CHAPTER XIII.

OVID had promised to return to Carmina in a minute. The minutes passed, and still Doctor Benjulia held him in talk.

Now that he was no longer seeking amusement, in his own dreary way, by mystifying Zo, the lines seemed to harden in the doctor's fleshless face. A scrupulously polite man, he was always cold in his politeness. He waited to have his hand shaken, and waited to be spoken to. And yet, on this occasion, he had something to say. When Ovid opened the conversation, he changed the subject directly.

'Benjulia! what brings You to the Zoological Gardens?'

'One of the monkeys has got brain disease; and they fancy I might like to see the beast before they kill him. Have you been thinking lately of that patient we lost?'

Not at the moment remembering the patient, Ovid made no immediate reply. The doctor seemed to distrust his silence.

'You don't mean to say you have forgotten the case?' he resumed. 'We called it hysteria, not knowing what else it was. I don't forgive the girl for slipping through our fingers; I hate to be beaten by Death, in that way. Have you made up your mind what to do, on the next occasion? Perhaps you think you could have saved her life if you had been sent for, now?'

'No, indeed, I am just as ignorant——'

'Give ignorance time,' Benjulia interposed, 'and ignorance will become knowledge—if a man is in earnest. The proper treatment might occur to you to-morrow.'

He held to his idea with such obstinacy that Ovid set him right, rather impatiently. 'The proper treatment has as much chance of occurring to the greatest ass in the profession,' he answered, 'as it has of occurring to me. I can put my mind to no good medical use; my work has been too much for me. I am obliged to give up practice, and rest—for a time.'

Not even a formal expression of sympathy escaped Doctor Benjulia. Having been a distrustful friend so far, he became an inquisitive friend now. 'You're going away, of course,' he said. 'Where to? On the Continent? Not to Italy—if you really want to recover your health!'

'What is the objection to Italy?'

The doctor put his great hand solemnly on his young friend's shoulder. 'The medical schools in that country are recovering their past reputation,' he said. 'They are becoming active centres of physiological inquiry. You

will be dragged into it, to a dead certainty. They're sure to try what they can strike out by collision with a man like you. What will become of that overworked mind of yours, when a lot of professors are searching it without mercy? Have you ever been to Canada?'

'No. Have you?'

'I have been everywhere. Canada is just the place for you, in this summer season. Bracing air; and steady-going doctors who leave the fools in Europe to pry into the secrets of Nature. Thousands of miles of land, if you like riding. Thousands of miles of water, if you like sailing. Pack up, and go to Canada.'

What did all this mean? Was he afraid that his colleague might stumble on some discovery which he was in search of himself? And did the discovery relate to his own special subject of brains and nerves? Ovid made an attempt to understand him.

'Tell me something about yourself, Ben-

julia,' he said. 'Are you returning to your regular professional work?'

Benjulia struck his bamboo stick emphatically on the gravel-walk. 'Never! Unless I know more than I know now.'

This surely meant that he was as much devoted to his chemical experiments as ever? In that case, how could Ovid (who knew nothing of chemical experiments) be an obstacle in the doctor's way? Baffled thus far, he made another attempt at inducing Benjulia to explain himself.

'When is the world to hear of your discoveries?' he asked.

The doctor's massive forehead gathered ominously into a frown. 'Damn the world!' That was his only reply.

Ovid was not disposed to allow himself to be kept in the dark in this way. 'I suppose you are going on with your experiments?' he said.

The gloom of Benjulia's grave eyes deepened: they stared with a stern fixedness into vacancy. His great head bent slowly over his broad breast. The whole man seemed to be shut up in himself. 'I go on a way of my own,' he growled. 'Let nobody cross it.'

After that reply, to persist in making inquiries would only have ended in needlessly provoking an irritable man. Ovid looked back towards Carmina. 'I must return to my friends,' he said.

The doctor lifted his head, like a man awakened. 'Have I been rude?' he asked. 'Don't talk to me about my experiments. That's my raw place, and you hit me on it. What did you say just now? Friends? who are your friends?' He rubbed his hand savagely over his forehead—it was a way he had of clearing his mind. 'I know,' he went on. 'I saw your friends just now. Who's the young lady?' His most intimate companions

had never heard him laugh: they had sometimes seen his thin-lipped mouth widen drearily into a smile. It widened now. 'Whoever she is,' he proceeded, 'Zo wonders why you don't kiss her.'

This specimen of Benjulia's attempts at pleasantry was not exactly to Ovid's taste. He shifted the topic to his little sister. 'You were always fond of Zo,' he said.

Benjulia looked thoroughly puzzled. Fondness for anybody was, to all appearance, one of the few subjects on which he had not qualified himself to offer an opinion. He gave his head another savage rub, and returned to the subject of the young lady. 'Who is she?' he asked again.

'My cousin,' Ovid replied as shortly as possible.

'Your cousin? A girl of Lady Northlake's?'

'No: my late uncle's daughter.'

Benjulia suddenly came to a standstill. 'What!' he cried, 'has that misbegotten child grown up to be a woman?'

Ovid started. Words of angry protest were on his lips, when he perceived Teresa and Zo on one side of him, and the keeper of the monkeys on the other. Benjulia dismissed the man, with the favourable answer which Zo had already reported. They walked on again. Ovid was at liberty to speak.

'Do you know what you said of my cousin, just now?' he began.

His tone seemed to surprise the doctor. 'What did I say?' he asked.

'You used a very offensive word. You called Carmina a "misbegotten child." Are you repeating some vile slander on the memory of her mother?'

Benjulia came to another standstill. 'Slander?' he repeated—and said no more.

Ovid's anger broke out. 'Yes!' he replied.

'Or a lie, if you like, told of a woman as high above reproach as your mother or mine!'

'You are hot,' the doctor remarked, and walked on again. 'When I was in Italy——' he paused to calculate, 'when I was at Rome, fifteen years ago, your cousin was a wretched little rickety child. I said to Robert Graywell, "Don't get too fond of that girl; she'll never live to grow up." He said something about taking her away to the mountain air. I didn't think, myself, the mountain air would be of any use. It seems I was wrong. Well! it's a surprise to me to find her——' he waited, and calculated again, 'to find her grown up to be seventeen years old.' To Ovid's ears, there was an inhuman indifference in his tone as he said this, which it was impossible not to resent, by looks, if not in words. Benjulia noticed the impression that he had produced, without in the least understanding it. 'Your nervous system's in a nasty state,' he remarked; 'you

had better take care of yourself. I'll go and look at the monkey.'

His face was like the face of the impenetrable sphinx; his deep bass voice droned placidly. Ovid's anger had passed by him like the passing of the summer air. 'Good-bye!' he said; 'and take care of those nasty nerves. I tell you again—they mean mischief.'

Not altogether willingly, Ovid made his apologies. 'If I have misunderstood you, I beg your pardon. At the same time, I don't think I am to blame. Why did you mislead me by using that detestable word?'

'Wasn't it the right word?'

'The right word—when you only wanted to speak of a poor sickly child! Considering that you took your degree at Oxford——'

'You could expect nothing better from the disadvantages of my education,' said the doctor, finishing the sentence with the grave composure that distinguished him. 'When I said "mis-

begotten," perhaps I ought to have said "half-begotten?" Thank you for reminding me. I'll look at the dictionary when I get home.'

Ovid's mind was not set at ease yet. 'There's one other thing,' he persisted, 'that seems unaccountable.' He started, and seized Benjulia by the arm. 'Stop!' he cried, with a sudden outburst of alarm.

'Well?' asked the doctor, stopping directly. 'What is it?'

'Nothing,' said Ovid, recoiling from a stain on the gravel walk, caused by the remains of an unlucky beetle, crushed under his friend's heavy foot. 'You trod on the beetle before I could stop you.'

Benjulia's astonishment at finding an adult male human being (not in a lunatic asylum) anxious to spare the life of a beetle, literally struck him speechless. His medical instincts came to his assistance. 'You had better leave London at once,' he suggested. 'Get into

pure air, and be out of doors all day long.' He turned over the remains of the beetle with the end of his stick. 'The common beetle,' he said; 'I haven't damaged a Specimen.'

Ovid returned to the subject, which had suffered interruption through his abortive little act of mercy. 'You knew my uncle in Italy. It seems strange, Benjulia, that I should never have heard of it before.'

'Yes; I knew your uncle; and,' he added with especial emphasis, 'I knew his wife.'

'Well?'

'Well, I can't say I felt any particular interest in either of them. Nothing happened afterwards to put me in mind of the acquaint ance till you told me who the young lady was, just now.'

'Surely my mother must have reminded you?'

'Not that I can remember. Women in her position don't much fancy talking of a

relative who has married'—he stopped to choose his next words. 'I don't want to be rude; suppose we say married beneath him?'

Reflection told Ovid that this was true. Even in conversation with himself (before the arrival in England of Robert's Will), his mother rarely mentioned her brother—and still more rarely his family. There was another reason for Mrs. Gallilee's silence, known only to herself. Robert was in the secret of her debts, and Robert had laid her under heavy pecuniary obligations. The very sound of his name was revolting to his amiable sister: it reminded her of that humiliating sense, known in society as a sense of gratitude.

Carmina was still waiting—and there was nothing further to be gained by returning to the subject of her mother with such a man as Benjulia. Ovid held out his hand to say good-bye.

Taking the offered hand readily enough,

the doctor repeated his odd question—'I haven't been rude, have I?'—with an unpleasant appearance of going through a form purely for form's sake. Ovid's natural generosity of feeling urged him to meet the advance, strangely as it had been made, with a friendly reception.

'I am afraid it is I who have been rude,' he said. 'Will you go back with me, and be introduced to Carmina?'

Benjulia made his acknowledgments in his own remarkable way. 'No, thank you,' he said, quietly, 'I'd rather see the monkey.'

CHAPTER XIV.

In the meantime, Zo had become the innocent cause of a difference of opinion between two no less dissimilar personages than Maria and the duenna.

Having her mind full of the sick monkey, the child felt a natural curiosity to see the other monkeys who were well. Amiable Miss Minerva consulted her young friend from Italy before she complied with Zo's wishes. Would Miss Carmina like to visit the monkey-house? Ovid's cousin, remembering Ovid's promise, looked towards the end of the walk. He was not returning to her—he was not even in sight. Carmina resigned herself to circumstances, with

a little air of pique which was duly registered in Miss Minerva's memory.

Arriving at the monkey-house, Teresa appeared in a new character. She surprised her companions by showing an interest in natural history.

'Are they all monkeys in that big place?' she asked. 'I don't know much about foreign beasts. How do they like it, I wonder?'

This comprehensive inquiry was addressed to the governess, as the most learned person present. Miss Minerva referred to her elder pupil with an encouraging smile. 'Maria will inform you,' she said. 'Her studies in natural history have made her well acquainted with the habits of monkeys.'

Thus authorised to exhibit her learning, even the discreet Maria actually blushed with pleasure. It was that young lady's most highly-prized reward to display her knowledge (in imitation of her governess's method of

instruction) for the benefit of unfortunate persons of the lower rank, whose education had been imperfectly carried out. The tone of amiable patronage with which she now imparted useful information to a woman old enough to be her grandmother, would have made the hands of the bygone generation burn to box her ears.

'The monkeys are kept in large and airy cages,' Maria began; 'and the temperature is regulated with the utmost care. I shall be happy to point out to you the difference between the monkey and the ape. You are not perhaps aware that the members of the latter family are called "Simiadæ," and are without tails and cheek-pouches?'

Listening so far in dumb amazement, Teresa checked the flow of information at tails and cheek-pouches.

'What gibberish is this child talking to me?' she asked. 'I want to know how the

monkeys amuse themselves in that large house?'

Maria's perfect training condescended to enlighten even this state of mind:

'They have ropes to swing on,' she answered sweetly; 'and visitors feed them through the wires of the cage. Branches of trees are also placed for their diversion; reminding many of them no doubt of the vast tropical forests in which, as we learn from travellers, they pass in flocks from tree to tree.'

Teresa held up her hand as a signal to stop. 'A little of You, my young lady, goes a long way,' she said. 'Consider how much I can hold, before you cram me at this rate.'

Maria was bewildered, but not daunted yet. 'Pardon me,' she pleaded; 'I fear I don't quite understand you.'

'Then there are two of us puzzled,' the duenna remarked. '*I* don't understand *you*. I shan't go into that house. A Christian can't

be expected to care about beasts—but right is right all the world over. Because a monkey is a nasty creature (as I have heard, not even good to eat when he's dead), that's no reason for taking him out of his own country and putting him into a cage. If we are to see creatures in prison, let's see creatures who have deserved it—men and women, rogues and sluts. The monkeys haven't deserved it. Go in—I'll wait for you at the door.'

Setting her bitterest emphasis on this protest, which expressed inveterate hostility to Maria (using compassion for caged animals as the readiest means at hand), Teresa seated herself in triumph on the nearest bench.

A young person, possessed of no more than ordinary knowledge, might have left the old woman to enjoy the privilege of saying the last word. Miss Minerva's pupil, exuding information as it were at every pore in her skin, had been rudely dried up at a moment's notice.

Even earthly perfection has its weak places within reach. Maria lost her temper.

'You will allow me to remind you,' she said, 'that intelligent curiosity leads us to study the habits of animals that are new to us. We place them in a cage——'

Teresa lost *her* temper.

'You're an animal that's new to me,' cried the irate duenna. 'I never in all my life met with such a child before. If you please, madam governess, put this girl into a cage. My intelligent curiosity wants to study a monkey that's new to me.'

It was fortunate for Teresa that she was Carmina's favourite and friend, and, as such, a person to be carefully handled. Miss Minerva stopped the growing quarrel with the readiest discretion and good-feeling. She patted Teresa on the shoulder, and looked at Carmina with a pleasant smile. 'Worthy old creature! how full of humour she is! The energy of the

people, Miss Carmina. I often remark the quaint force with which they express their ideas. No—not a word of apology, I beg and pray. Maria, my dear, take your sister's hand, and we will follow.' She put her arm in Carmina's arm with the happiest mixture of familiarity and respect, and she nodded to Carmina's old companion with the cordiality of a good-humoured friend.

Teresa was not further irritated by being kept waiting for any length of time. In a few minutes Carmina joined her on the bench.

'Tired of the beasts already, my pretty one?'

'Worse than tired—driven away by the smell! Dear old Teresa, why did you speak so roughly to Miss Minerva and Maria?'

'Because I hate them! because I hate the family! Was your poor father demented in his last moments, when he trusted you among these detestable people?'

Carmina listened in astonishment. 'You said just the contrary of the family,' she exclaimed, 'only yesterday!'

Teresa hung her head in confusion. Her well-meant attempt to reconcile Carmina to the new life on which she had entered was now revealed as a sham, thanks to her own outbreak of temper. The one honest alternative left was to own the truth, and put Carmina on her guard without alarming her, if possible.

'I'll never tell a lie again, as long as I live,' Teresa declared. 'You see I didn't like to discourage you. After all, I dare say I'm more wrong than right in my opinion. But it *is* my opinion, for all that. I hate those women, mistress and governess, both alike. There! now it's out. Are you angry with me?'

'I am never angry with you, my old friend; I am only a little vexed. Don't say you hate people, after only knowing them for

a day or two! I am sure Miss Minerva has been very kind—to me, as well as to you. I feel ashamed of myself already for having begun by disliking her.'

Teresa took her young mistress's hand, and patted it compassionately. 'Poor innocent, if you only had my experience to help you! There are good ones and bad ones among all creatures. I say to you the Gallilees are bad ones! Even their music-master (I saw him this morning) looks like a rogue. You will tell me the poor old gentleman is harmless, surely. I shall not contradict that—I shall only ask, what is the use of a man who is as weak as water? Oh, I like him, but I distinguish! I also like Zo. But what is a child—especially when that beastly governess has muddled her unfortunate little head with learning? No, my angel, there's but one person among these people who comforts me, when I think of the day that will part us. Ha! do I

see a little colour coming into your cheeks? You sly girl! you know who it is. *There* is what I call a Man! If I was as young as you are, and as pretty as you are——'

A warning gesture from Carmina closed Teresa's lips. Ovid was rapidly approaching them.

He looked a little annoyed, and he made his apologies without mentioning the doctor's name. His cousin was interested enough in him already to ask herself what this meant. Did he really dislike Benjulia, and had there been some disagreement between them?

'Was the tall doctor so very interesting?' she ventured to inquire.

'Not in the least!' He answered as if the subject was disagreeable to him—and yet he returned to it. 'By-the-by, did you ever hear Benjulia's name mentioned, at home in Italy?'

'Never! Did he know my father and mother?'

'He says so.'

'Oh, do introduce me to him!'

'We must wait a little. He prefers being introduced to the monkey to-day. Where are Miss Minerva and the children?'

Teresa replied. She pointed to the monkey-house, and then drew Ovid aside. 'Take her to see some more birds, and trust me to keep the governess out of your way,' whispered the good creature. 'Make love—hot love to her, doctor!'

In a minute more the cousins were out of sight. How are you to make love to a young girl, after an acquaintance of a day or two? The question would have been easily answered by some men. It thoroughly puzzled Ovid.

'I am so glad to get back to you!' he said, honestly opening his mind to her. 'Were you half as glad when you saw me return?'

He knew nothing of the devious and serpentine paths by which love finds the way to its ends. It had not occurred to him to approach her with those secret tones and stolen looks which speak for themselves. She answered with the straightforward directness of which he had set the example.

'I hope you don't think me insensible to your kindness,' she said. 'I am more pleased and more proud than I can tell you.'

'Proud?' Ovid repeated, not immediately understanding her.

'Why not?' she asked. 'My poor father used to say you would be an honour to the family. Ought I not to be proud, when I find such a man taking so much notice of me?'

She looked up at him shyly. At that moment, he would have resigned all his prospects of celebrity for the privilege of kissing her. He made another attempt to bring her—in spirit—a little nearer to him.

'Carmina, do you remember where you first saw me?'

'How can you ask?—it was in the concert-room. When I saw you there, I remembered passing you in the large Square. It seems a strange coincidence that you should have gone to the very concert that Teresa and I went to by accident.'

Ovid ran the risk, and made his confession. 'It was no coincidence,' he said. 'After our meeting in the Square I followed you to the concert.'

This bold avowal would have confused a less innocent girl. It only took Carmina by surprise.

'What made you follow us?' she asked.

Us? Did she suppose he had followed the old woman? Ovid lost no time in setting her right. 'I didn't even see Teresa,' he said. 'I followed You.'

She was silent. What did her silence

mean? Was she confused, or was she still at a loss to understand him? That morbid sensitiveness, which was one of the most serious signs of his failing health, was by this time sufficiently irritated to hurry him into extremities. 'Did you ever hear,' he asked, 'of such a thing as love at first sight?'

She started. Surprise, confusion, doubt, succeeded each other in rapid changes on her mobile and delicate face. Still silent, she roused her courage, and looked at him.

If he had returned the look, he would have told the story of his first love without another word to help him. But his shattered nerves unmanned him, at the moment of all others when it was his interest to be bold. The fear that he might have allowed himself to speak too freely—a weakness which would never have misled him in his days of health and strength—kept his eyes on the ground. She looked away again with a quick flush of shame. When

such a man as Ovid spoke of love at first sight, what an instance of her own vanity it was to have thought that his mind was dwelling on *her*! He had kindly lowered himself to the level of a girl's intelligence, and had been trying to interest her by talking the language of romance. She was so dissatisfied with herself that she made a movement to turn back.

He was too bitterly disappointed, on his side, to attempt to prolong the interview. A deadly sense of weakness was beginning to overpower him. It was the inevitable result of his utter want of care for himself. After a sleepless night, he had taken a long walk before breakfast; and to these demands on his failing reserves of strength, he had now added the fatigue of dawdling about a garden. Physically and mentally he had no energy left.

'I didn't mean it,' he said to Carmina sadly; 'I am afraid I have offended you.'

'Oh, how little you know me,' she cried, 'if you think that!'

This time their eyes met. The truth dawned on her—and he saw it.

He took her hand. The clammy coldness of his grasp startled her. 'Do you still wonder why I followed you?' he asked. The words were so faintly uttered that she could barely hear them. Heavy drops of perspiration stood on his forehead; his face faded to a gray and ghastly whiteness—he staggered, and tried desperately to catch at the branch of a tree near them. She threw her arms round him. With all her little strength she tried to hold him up. Her utmost effort only availed to drag him to the grass plot by their side, and to soften his fall. Even as the cry for help passed her lips, she saw help coming. A tall man was approaching her—not running, even when he saw what had happened; only stalking with long strides. He was followed by one of the keepers

of the gardens. Doctor Benjulia had his sick monkey to take care of. He kept the creature sheltered under his long frock-coat.

'Don't do that, if you please,' was all the doctor said, as Carmina tried to lift Ovid's head from the grass. He spoke with his customary composure, and laid his hand on the heart of the fainting man, as coolly as if it had been the heart of a stranger. 'Which of you two can run the fastest?' he asked, looking backwards and forwards between Carmina and the keeper. 'I want some brandy.'

The refreshment room was within sight. Before the keeper quite understood what was required of him, Carmina was speeding over the grass like Atalanta herself.

Benjulia looked after her, with his usual grave attention. 'That wench can run,' he said to himself, and turned once more to Ovid. 'In his state of health, he's been fool enough to over-exert himself.' So he disposed of the

case in his own mind. Having done that, he remembered the monkey, deposited for the time being on the grass. 'Too cold for him,' he remarked, with more appearance of interest than he had shown yet. 'Here, keeper! Pick up the monkey till I'm ready to take him again.' The man hesitated.

'He might bite me, sir.'

'Pick him up!' the doctor reiterated; 'he can't bite anybody, after what I've done to him.' The monkey was indeed in a state of stupor. The keeper obeyed his instructions, looking half stupefied himself: he seemed to be even more afraid of the doctor than of the monkey. 'Do you think I'm the Devil?' Benjulia asked with dismal irony. The man looked as if he would say 'Yes,' if he dared.

Carmina came running back with the brandy. The doctor smelt it first, and then took notice of her. 'Out of breath?' he said.

'Why don't you give him the brandy?' she answered impatiently.

'Strong lungs,' Benjulia proceeded, sitting down cross-legged by Ovid, and administering the stimulant without hurrying himself. 'Some girls would not have been able to speak, after such a run as you have had. I didn't think much of you or your lungs when you were a baby.'

'Is he coming to himself?' Carmina asked.

'Do you know what a pump is?' Benjulia rejoined. 'Very well; a pump sometimes gets out of order. Give the carpenter time, and he'll put it right again.' He let his mighty hand drop on Ovid's breast. '*This* pump is out of order; and I'm the carpenter. Give me time, and I'll set it right again. You're not a bit like your mother.'

Watching eagerly for the slightest signs of recovery in Ovid's face, Carmina detected a faint return of colour. She was so relieved that she was able to listen to the doctor's

oddly discursive talk, and even to join in it. 'Some of our friends used to think I was like my father,' she answered.

'Did they?' said Benjulia—and shut his thin-lipped mouth as if he was determined to drop the subject for ever.

Ovid stirred feebly, and half opened his eyes.

Benjulia got up. 'You don't want me any longer,' he said. 'Now, Mr. Keeper, give me back the monkey.' He dismissed the man, and tucked the monkey under one arm as if it had been a bundle. 'There are your friends,' he resumed, pointing to the end of the walk. 'Good-day!'

Carmina stopped him. Too anxious to stand on ceremony, she laid her hand on his arm. He shook it off—not angrily: just brushing it away, as he might have brushed away the ash of his cigar or a splash of mud in the street.

'What does this fainting fit mean?' she asked timidly. 'Is Ovid going to be ill?'

'Seriously ill—unless you do the right thing with him, and do it at once.' He walked away. She followed him, humbly and yet resolutely. 'Tell me, if you please,' she said, 'what we are to do.'

He looked back over his shoulder. 'Send him away.'

She returned, and knelt down by Ovid—still slowly reviving. With a fond and gentle hand, she wiped the moisture from his forehead.

'Just as we were beginning to understand each other!' she said to herself, with a sad little sigh.

CHAPTER XV.

Two days passed. In spite of the warnings that he had received, Ovid remained in London.

The indisputable authority of Benjulia had no more effect on him than the unanswerable arguments of Mrs. Gallilee. 'Recent circumstances' (as his mother expressed it) 'had strengthened his infatuated resistance to reason.' The dreaded necessity for Teresa's departure had been hastened by a telegram from Italy: Ovid felt for Carmina's distress with sympathies which made her dearer to him than ever. On the second morning after the visit to the Zoological Gardens, her fortitude had been severely tried. She had found the telegram under her

pillow, enclosed in a farewell letter. Teresa had gone.

'My Carmina,—I have kissed you, and cried over you, and I am writing good-bye as well as my poor eyes will let me. Oh, my heart's darling, I cannot be cruel enough to wake you, and see you suffer! Forgive me for going away, with only this dumb farewell. I am so fond of you—that is my only excuse. While he still lives, my helpless old man has his claim on me. Write by every post, and trust me to write back—and remember what I said when I spoke of Ovid. Love the good man who loves *you*; and try to make the best of the others. They cannot surely be cruel to the poor angel who depends on their kindness. Oh, how hard life is——'

The paper was blotted, and the rest was illegible.

The miserable day of Teresa's departure was passed by Carmina in the solitude of her

room: gently and firmly, she refused to see anyone. This strange conduct added to Mrs. Gallilee's anxieties. Already absorbed in considering Ovid's obstinacy, and the means of overcoming it, she was now confronted by a resolute side in the character of her niece, which took her by surprise. There might be difficulties to come, in managing Carmina, which she had not foreseen. Meanwhile, she was left to act on her own unaided discretion in the serious matter of her son's failing health. Benjulia had refused to help her; he was too closely occupied in his laboratory to pay or receive visits. 'I have already given my advice' (the doctor wrote). 'Send him away. When he has had a month's change, let me see his letters; and then, if I have anything more to say, I will tell you what I think of your son.'

Left in this position, Mrs. Gallilee's hard self-denial yielded to the one sound conclusion

that lay before her. The only influence that could be now used over Ovid, with the smallest chance of success, was the influence of Carmina. Three days after Teresa's departure, she invited her niece to take tea in her own boudoir. Carmina found her reading. 'A charming book,' she said, as she laid it down, 'on a most interesting subject, Geographical Botany. The author divides the earth into twenty-five botanical regions—but, I forget; you are not like Maria; you don't care about these things.'

'I am so ignorant,' Carmina pleaded. 'Perhaps, I may know better when I get older.' A book on the table attracted her by its beautiful binding. She took it up. Mrs. Gallilee looked at her with compassionate good humour.

'Science again, my dear,' she said facetiously, 'inviting you in a pretty dress! You have taken up the "Curiosities of Coprolites."

That book is one of my distinctions—a presentation copy from the author.'

'What are Coprolites?' Carmina asked, trying to inform herself on the subject of her aunt's distinctions.

Still good-humoured, but with an effort that began to appear, Mrs. Gallilee lowered herself to the level of her niece.

'Coprolites,' she explained, 'are the fossilised indigestions of extinct reptiles. The great philosopher who has written that book has discovered scales, bones, teeth, and shells—the undigested food of those interesting Saurians. What a man! what a field for investigation! Tell me about your own reading. What have you found in the library?'

'Very interesting books—at least to me,' Carmina answered. 'I have found many volumes of poetry. Do you ever read poetry?'

Mrs. Gallilee laid herself back in her chair,

and submitted patiently to her niece's simplicity. 'Poetry?' she repeated, in accents of resignation. 'Oh, good heavens!'

Unlucky Carmina tried a more promising topic. 'What beautiful flowers you have in the drawing-room!' she said.

'Nothing remarkable, my dear. Everybody has flowers in their drawing-rooms—they are part of the furniture.'

'Did you arrange them yourself, aunt?'

Mrs. Gallilee still endured it. 'The florist's man,' she said, 'does all that. I sometimes dissect flowers, but I never trouble myself to arrange them. What would be the use of the man if I did?' This view of the question struck Carmina dumb. Mrs. Gallilee went on. 'By-the-by, talking of flowers reminds one of other superfluities. Have you tried the piano in your room? Will it do?'

'The tone is quite perfect!' Carmina answered with enthusiasm. 'Did you choose it?'

Mrs. Gallilee looked as if she was going to say 'Good Heavens!' again, and perhaps to endure it no longer. Carmina was too simple to interpret these signs in the right way. Why should her aunt not choose a piano? 'Don't you like music?' she asked.

Mrs. Gallilee made a last effort. 'When you see a little more of society, my child, you will know that one *must* like music. So again with pictures—one *must* go to the Royal Academy Exhibition. So again——'

Before she could mention any more social sacrifices, the servant came in with a letter, and stopped her.

Mrs. Gallilee looked at the address. The weary indifference of her manner changed to vivid interest, the moment she saw the handwriting. 'From the Professor!' she exclaimed. 'Excuse me, for one minute.' She read the letter, and closed it again with a sigh of relief. 'I knew it!' she said to herself. 'I have

always maintained that the albuminoid substance of frog's eggs is insufficient (viewed as nourishment) to transform a tadpole into a frog —and, at last, the Professor owns that I am right. I beg your pardon, Carmina; I am carried away by a subject that I have been working at in my stolen intervals for weeks past. Let me give you some tea. I have asked Miss Minerva to join us. What is keeping her, I wonder? She is usually so punctual. I suppose Zoe has been behaving badly again.'

In a few minutes more, the governess herself confirmed this maternal forewarning of the truth. Zo had declined to commit to memory 'the political consequences of the granting of Magna Charta'— and now stood reserved for punishment, when her mother 'had time to attend to it.' Mrs. Gallilee at once disposed of this little responsibility. 'Bread and water for tea,' she said, and proceeded to the business of the evening.

'I wish to speak to you both,' she began, 'on the subject of my son.'

The two persons addressed waited in silence to hear more. Carmina's head drooped: she looked down. Miss Minerva attentively observed Mrs. Gallilee. 'Why am I invited to hear what she has to say about her son?' was the question which occurred to the governess. 'Is she afraid that Carmina might tell me about it, if I was not let into the family secrets?'

Admirably reasoned, and correctly guessed!

Mrs. Gallilee had latterly observed that the governess was insinuating herself into the confidence of her niece—that is to say, into the confidence of a young lady, whose father was generally reported to have died in possession of a handsome fortune. Personal influence, once obtained over an heiress, is not infrequently misused. To check the further growth of a friendship of this sort (without openly offending

Miss Minerva) was an imperative duty. Mrs. Gallilee saw her way to the discreet accomplishment of that object. Her niece and her governess were interested—diversely interested—in Ovid. If she invited them both together, to consult with her on the delicate subject of her son, there would be every chance of exciting some difference of opinion, sufficiently irritating to begin the process of estrangement, by keeping them apart when they had left the tea-table.

'It is most important that there should be no misunderstanding among us,' Mrs. Gallilee proceeded. 'Let me set the example of speaking without reserve. We all three know that Ovid persists in remaining in London——'

She paused, on the point of finishing the sentence. Although she *had* converted a Professor, Mrs. Gallilee was still only a woman. There did enter into her other calculations, the possibility of exciting some accidental betrayal

of her governess's passion for her son. On alluding to Ovid, she turned suddenly to Miss Minerva. 'I am sure you will excuse my troubling you with family anxieties,' she said—'especially when they are connected with the health of my son.'

It was cleverly done, but it laboured under one disadvantage. Miss Minerva had no idea of what the needless apology meant, having no suspicion of the discovery of her secret by her employer. But to feel herself baffled in trying to penetrate Mrs. Gallilee's motives was enough, of itself, to put Mrs. Gallilee's governess on her guard for the rest of the evening.

'You honour me, madam, by admitting me to your confidence'—was what she said. 'Trip me up, you cat, if you can!'—was what she thought.

Mrs. Gallilee resumed.

'We know that Ovid persists in remaining in London, when change of air and scene are

absolutely necessary to the recovery of his health. And we know why. Carmina, my child, don't think for a moment that I blame you! don't even suppose that I blame my son. You are too charming a person not to excuse, nay even to justify, any man's admiration. But let us (as we hard old people say) look the facts in the face: If Ovid had not seen you, he would be now on the health-giving sea, on his way to Spain and Italy. You are the innocent cause of his obstinate indifference, his most deplorable and dangerous disregard of the duty which he owes to himself. He refuses to listen to his mother, he sets the opinion of his skilled medical colleague at defiance. But one person has any influence over him now.' She paused again, and tried to trip up the governess once more. 'Miss Minerva, let me appeal to You. I regard you as a member of our family; I have the sincerest admiration of your tact and good sense. Am I exceeding the

limits of delicacy, if I say plainly to my niece, Persuade Ovid to go?'

If Carmina had possessed an elder sister, with a plain personal appearance and an easy conscience, not even that sister could have matched the perfect composure with which Miss Minerva replied.

'I don't possess your happy faculty of expressing yourself, Mrs. Gallilee. But, if I had been in your place, I should have said to the best of my poor ability exactly what you have said now.' She bent her head with a graceful gesture of respect, and looked at Carmina with a gentle sisterly interest while she stirred her tea.

At the very opening of the skirmish, Mrs. Gallilee was defeated. She had failed to provoke the slightest sign of jealousy, or even of ill-temper. Unquestionably the most crafty and most cruel woman of the two—possessing the most dangerously deceitful manner, and the

most mischievous readiness of language—she was, nevertheless, Miss Minerva's inferior in the one supreme capacity of which they both stood in need, the capacity for self-restraint.

She showed this inferiority on expressing her thanks. The underlying malice broke through the smooth surface that was intended to hide it. 'I am apt to doubt myself,' she said; 'and such sound encouragement as yours always relieves me. Of course I don't ask you for more than a word of advice. Of course I don't expect *you* to persuade Ovid.'

'Of course not!' Miss Minerva agreed. 'May I ask for a little more sugar in my tea?'

Mrs. Gallilee turned to Carmina.

'Well, my dear? I have spoken to you, as I might have spoken to one of my own daughters, if she had been of your age. Tell me frankly, in return, whether I may count on your help.'

Still pale and downcast, Carmina obeyed. 'I will do my best, if you wish it. But——'

'Yes? Go on.'

She still hesitated. Mrs. Gallilee tried gentle remonstrance. 'My child, surely you are not afraid of me?'

She was certainly afraid. But she controlled herself.

'You are Ovid's mother, and I am only his cousin,' she resumed. 'I don't like to hear you say that my influence over him is greater than yours.'

It was far from the poor girl's intention; but there was an implied rebuke in this. In her present state of irritation, Mrs. Gallilee felt it.

'Come! come!' she said. 'Don't affect to be ignorant, my dear, of what you know perfectly well.'

Carmina lifted her head. For the first time in the experience of the two elder women, this

gentle creature showed that she could resent an insult. The fine spirit that was in her fired her eyes, and fixed them firmly on her aunt.

'Do you accuse me of deceit?' she asked.

'Let us call it false modesty,' Mrs. Gallilee retorted.

Carmina rose without another word—and walked out of the room.

In the extremity of her surprise, Mrs. Gallilee appealed to Miss Minerva. 'Is she in a passion?'

'She didn't bang the door,' the governess quietly remarked.

'I am not joking, Miss Minerva.'

'*I* am not joking either, madam.'

The tone of that answer implied an uncompromising assertion of equality. You are not to suppose (it said) that a lady drops below your level, because she receives a salary and teaches your children. Mrs. Gallilee was so angry, by this time, that she forgot the import-

ance of preventing a conference between Miss Minerva and her niece. For once, she was the creature of impulse—the overpowering impulse to dismiss her insolent governess from her hospitable table.

'May I offer you another cup of tea?'

'Thank you—no more. May I return to my pupils?'

'By all means!'

Carmina had not been five minutes in her own room before she heard a knock at the door. Had Mrs. Gallilee followed her? 'Who is there?' she asked. And a voice outside answered,

'Only Miss Minerva!'

CHAPTER XVI.

'I AM afraid I have startled you?' said the governess, carefully closing the door.

'I thought it was my aunt,' Carmina answered, as simply as a child.

'Have you been crying?'

'I couldn't help it, Miss Minerva.'

'Mrs. Gallilee spoke cruelly to you—I don't wonder at your feeling angry.'

Carmina gently shook her head. 'I have been crying,' she explained, 'because I am sorry and ashamed. How can I make it up with my aunt? Shall I go back at once and beg her pardon? I think you are my friend, Miss Minerva. Will you advise me?'

It was so prettily and innocently said that

even the governess was touched—for a moment. 'Shall I prove to you that I am your friend?' she proposed. 'I advise you not to go back yet to your aunt—and I will tell you why. Mrs. Gallilee bears malice; she is a thoroughly unforgiving woman. And I should be the first to feel it, if she knew what I have just said to you.'

'Oh, Miss Minerva! you don't think that I would betray your confidence?'

'No, my dear, I don't. I felt attracted towards you, when we first met. You didn't return the feeling—you (very naturally) disliked me. I am ugly and ill-tempered: and, if there is anything good in me, it doesn't show itself on the surface. Yes! yes! I believe you are beginning to understand me. If I can make your life here a little happier, as time goes on, I shall be only too glad to do it.' She put her long yellow hands on either side of Carmina's head, and kissed her forehead.

The poor child threw her arms round Miss Minerva's neck, and cried her heart out on the bosom of the woman who was deceiving her. 'I have nobody left, now Teresa has gone,' she said. 'Oh, do try to be kind to me—I feel so friendless and so lonely!'

Miss Minerva neither moved nor spoke. She waited, and let the girl cry.

Her heavy black eyebrows gathered into a frown; her sallow face deepened in colour. She was in a state of rebellion against herself. Through all the hardening influences of the woman's life—through the fortifications against good which watchful evil builds in human hearts—that innocent outburst of trust and grief had broken its way; and had purified for a while the fetid inner darkness with divine light. She had entered the room, with her own base interests to serve. In her small sordid way she, like her employer, was persecuted by debts—miserable debts to sellers of expensive washes,

which might render her ugly complexion more passable in Ovid's eyes; to makers of costly gloves, which might show Ovid the shape of her hands, and hide their colour; to skilled workmen in fine leather, who could tempt Ovid to look at her high instep, and her fine ankle—the only beauties that she could reveal to the only man whom she cared to please. For the time, those importunate creditors ceased to threaten her. For the time, what she had heard in the conservatory, while they were reading the Will, lost its tempting influence. She remained in the room for half an hour more—and she left it without having borrowed a farthing.

'Are you easier now?'

'Yes, dear.'

Carmina dried her eyes, and looked shyly at Miss Minerva. 'I have been treating you as if I had a sister,' she said; 'you don't think me too familiar, I hope?'

'I wish I *was* your sister, God knows!'

The words were hardly out of her mouth before she was startled by her own fervour. 'Shall I tell you what to do with Mrs. Gallilee?' she said abruptly. 'Write her a little note.'

'Yes! yes! and you will take it for me?'

Carmina's eyes brightened through her tears, the suggestion was such a relief! In a minute the note was written: 'My dear Aunt, I have behaved very badly, and I am very much ashamed of it. May I trust to your kind indulgence to forgive me? I will try to be worthier of your kindness for the future; and I sincerely beg your pardon.' She signed her name in breathless haste. 'Please take it at once!' she said eagerly.

Miss Minerva smiled. 'If I take it,' she said, 'I shall do harm instead of good—I shall be accused of interfering. Give it to one of the servants. Not yet! When Mrs. Gallilee is angry, she doesn't get over it so soon as you

seem to think. Leave her to dabble in science first,' said the governess in tones of immeasurable contempt. 'When she has half stifled herself with some filthy smell, or dissected some wretched insect or flower, she may be in a better humour. Wait.'

Carmina thought of the happy days at home in Italy, when her father used to laugh at her little outbreaks of temper, and good Teresa only shrugged her shoulders. What a change—oh, me, what a change for the worse! She drew from her bosom a locket, hung round her neck by a thin gold chain—and opened it, and kissed the glass over the miniature portraits inside. 'Would you like to see them?' she said to Miss Minerva. 'My mother's likeness was painted for me by my father; and then he had his photograph taken to match it. I open my portraits and look at them, while I say my prayers. It's almost like having them alive again, sometimes. Oh, if I only had my father

to advise me now—!' Her heart swelled—but she kept back the tears: she was learning *that* self-restraint, poor soul, already! 'Perhaps,' she went on, 'I ought not to want advice. After that fainting-fit in the Gardens, if I can persuade Ovid to leave us, I ought to do it—and I will do it!'

Miss Minerva crossed the room, and looked out of window. Carmina had roused the dormant jealousy; Carmina had fatally weakened the good influences which she had herself produced. The sudden silence of her new friend perplexed her. She too went to the window. 'Do you think it would be taking a liberty?' she asked.

'No.'

A short answer—and still looking out of window! Carmina tried again. 'Besides, there are my aunt's wishes to consider. After my bad behaviour——'

Miss Minerva turned round from the

window sharply. 'Of course! There can't be a doubt of it.' Her tone softened a little. 'You are young, Carmina—I suppose I may call you by your name—you are young and simple. Do those innocent eyes of yours ever see below the surface?'

'I don't quite understand you.'

'Do you think your aunt's only motive in wishing Mr. Ovid Vere to leave London is anxiety about his health? Do you feel no suspicion that she wants to keep him away from You?'

Carmina toyed with her locket, in an embarrassment which she was quite unable to disguise. 'Are you afraid to trust me?' Miss Minerva asked. That reproach opened the girl's lips instantly.

'I am afraid to tell you how foolish I am,' she answered. 'Perhaps, I still feel a little strangeness between us? It seems to be so formal to call you Miss Minerva. I don't

know what your Christian name is. Will you tell me?'

Miss Minerva replied rather unwillingly. 'My name is Frances. Don't call me Fanny!'

'Why not?'

'Because it's too absurd to be endured! What does the mere sound of Fanny suggest? A flirting, dancing creature—plump and fair, and playful and pretty!' She went to the looking-glass, and pointed disdainfully to the reflection of herself. 'Sickening to think of,' she said, 'when you look at *that.* Call me Frances—a man's name, with only the difference between an i and an e. No sentiment in it; hard, like me. Well, what was it you didn't like to say of yourself?'

Carmina dropped her voice to a whisper. 'It's no use asking me what I do see, or don't see, in my aunt,' she answered. 'I am afraid we shall never be—what we ought to be to

each other. When she came to that concert, and sat by me and looked at me——' She stopped, and shuddered over the recollection of it.

Miss Minerva urged her to go on—first, by a gesture; then by a suggestion: 'They said you fainted under the heat.'

'I didn't feel the heat. I felt a horrid creeping all over me. Before I looked at her, mind!—when I only knew that somebody was sitting next to me. And then, I did look round. Her eyes and my eyes flashed into each other. In that one moment, I lost all sense of myself as if I was dead. I can only tell you of it in that way. It was a dreadful surprise to me to remember it—and a dreadful pain—when they brought me to myself again. Though I do look so little and so weak, I am stronger than people think; I never fainted before. My aunt is—how can I say it properly?—hard to get on with since that

time. Is there something wicked in my nature? I do believe she feels in the same way towards me. Yes; I dare say it's imagination, but it's as bad as reality for all that. Oh, I am sure you are right—she does want to keep Ovid out of my way!'

'Because she doesn't like you?' said Miss Minerva. 'Is that the only reason you can think of?'

'What other reason can there be?'

The governess summoned her utmost power of self-restraint. She needed it, even to speak of the bare possibility of Carmina's marriage to Ovid, as if it was only a matter of speculative interest to herself.

'Some people object to marriages between cousins,' she said. 'You are cousins. Some people object to marriages between Catholics and Protestants. You are a Catholic——' No! She could not trust herself to refer to him directly; she went on to the next sentence.

'And there might be some other reason,' she resumed.

'Do you know what it is?' Carmina asked.

'No more than you do—thus far.'

She spoke the plain truth. Thanks to the dog's interruption, and to the necessity of saving herself from discovery, the last clauses of the Will had been read in her absence.

'Can't you even guess what it is?' Carmina persisted.

'Mrs. Gallilee is very ambitious,' the governess replied: 'and her son has a fortune of his own. She may wish him to marry a lady of high rank. But—no—she is always in need of money. In some way, money may be concerned in it.'

'In what way?' Carmina asked.

'I have already told you,' Miss Minerva answered, 'that I don't know.'

Before the conversation could proceed, they were interrupted by the appearance of Mrs.

Gallilee's maid, with a message from the school-room. Miss Maria wanted a little help in her Latin lesson. Noticing Carmina's letter, as she advanced to the door, it struck Miss Minerva that the woman might deliver it. 'Is Mrs. Gallilee at home?' she asked. Mrs. Gallilee had just gone out. 'One of her scientific lectures, I suppose,' said Miss Minerva to Carmina. 'Your note must wait till she comes back.'

The door closed on the governess—and the lady's-maid took a liberty. She remained in the room; and produced a morsel of folded paper, hitherto concealed from view. Smirking and smiling, she handed the paper to Carmina.

'From Mr. Ovid, Miss.'

CHAPTER XVII.

'PRAY come to me; I am waiting for you in the garden of the Square.'

In those two lines, Ovid's note began and ended. Mrs. Gallilee's maid—deeply interested in an appointment which was not without precedent in her own experience—ventured on an expression of sympathy, before she returned to the servants' hall. 'Please to excuse me, Miss; I hope Mr. Ovid isn't ill? He looked sadly pale, I thought. Allow me to give you your hat.' Carmina thanked her, and hurried downstairs.

Ovid was waiting at the gate of the Square —and he did indeed look wretchedly ill.

It was useless to make inquiries; they only

seemed to irritate him. 'I am better already, now you have come to me.' He said that, and led the way to a sheltered seat among the trees. In the later evening-time the Square was almost empty. Two middle-aged ladies, walking up and down (who considerately remembered their own youth, and kept out of the way), and a boy rigging a model yacht (who was too closely occupied to notice them), were the only persons in the enclosure besides themselves.

'Does my mother know that you have come here?' Ovid asked.

'Mrs. Gallilee has gone out. I didn't stop to think of it, when I got your letter. Am I doing wrong?'

Ovid took her hand. 'Is it doing wrong to relieve me of anxieties that I have no courage to endure? When we meet in the house either my mother or her obedient servant, Miss Minerva, is sure to interrupt us.

At last, my darling, I have got you to myself! You know that I love you. Why can't I look into your heart, and see what secrets it is keeping from me? I try to hope; but I want some little encouragement. Carmina! shall I ever hear you say that you love me?'

She trembled, and turned away her head. Her own words to the governess were in her mind; her own conviction of the want of all sympathy between his mother and herself made her shrink from answering him.

'I understand your silence.' With those words he dropped her hand, and looked at her no more.

It was sadly, not bitterly spoken. She attempted to find excuses; she showed but too plainly how she pitied him. 'If I only had myself to think of——' Her voice failed her. A new life came into his eyes, the colour rose in his haggard face: even

those few faltering words had encouraged him!

She tried again to make him understand her. 'I am so afraid of distressing you, Ovid; and I am so anxious not to make mischief between you and your mother——'

'What has my mother to do with it?'

She went on, without noticing the interruption. 'You won't think me ungrateful? We had better speak of something else. Only this evening, your mother sent for me, and—don't be angry!—I am afraid she might be vexed if she knew what you have been saying to me. Perhaps I am wrong? Perhaps she only thinks I am too young. Oh, Ovid, how you look at me! Your mother hasn't said in so many words——'

'What *has* she said?'

In that question she saw the chance of speaking to him of other interests than the interests of love.

'You must go away to another climate,' she said; 'and your mother tells me I must persuade you to do it. I obey her with a heavy heart. Dear Ovid, you know how I shall miss you; you know what a loss it will be to me, when you say good-bye—but there is only one way to get well again. I entreat you to take that way! Your mother thinks I have some influence over you. Have I any influence?'

'Judge for yourself,' he answered. 'You wish me to leave you?'

'For your own sake. Only for your own sake.'

'Do you wish me to come back again?'

'It's cruel to ask the question!'

'It rests with you, Carmina. Send me away when you like, and where you like. But, before I go, give me my one reason for making the sacrifice. No change will do anything for me, no climate will restore my health—unless

you give me your love. I am old enough to know myself; I have thought of it by day and by night. Am I cruel to press you in this way? I will only say one word more. It doesn't matter what becomes of me—if you refuse to be my wife.'

Without experience, without advice—with her own heart protesting against her silence—the restraint that she had laid on herself grew harder and harder to endure. The tears rose in her eyes. He saw them; they embittered his mind against his mother. With a darkening face he rose, and walked up and down before her, struggling with himself.

'This is my mother's doing,' he said.

His tone terrified her. The dread, present to her mind all through the interview, of making herself a cause of estrangement between mother and son, so completely overcame her that she even made an attempt to defend Mrs. Gallilee! At the first words, he

sat down by her again. For a moment, he scrutinised her face without mercy—and then repented of his own severity.

'My poor child,' he said, 'you are afraid to tell me what has happened. I won't press you to speak against your own inclinations. It would be cruel and needless—I have got at the truth at last. In the one hope of my life, my mother is my enemy. She is bent on separating us; she shall not succeed. I won't leave you.'

Carmina looked at him. His eyes dropped before her, in confusion and shame.

'Are you angry with me?' she asked.

No reproaches could have touched his heart as that question touched it. 'Angry with you? Oh, my darling, if you only knew how angry I am with myself! It cuts me to the heart to see how I have distressed you. I am a miserable selfish wretch; I don't deserve your love. Forgive me, and forget me. I will

make the best atonement I can, Carmina. I will go away to-morrow.'

Under hard trial, she had preserved her self-control. She had resisted him; she had resisted herself. His sudden submission disarmed her in an instant. With a low cry of love and fear she threw her arms round his neck, and laid her burning cheek against his face. 'I can't help it,' she whispered; 'oh, Ovid, don't despise me!' His arms closed round her; his lips were pressed to hers. 'Kiss me,' he said. She kissed him, trembling in his embrace. That innocent self-abandonment did not plead with him in vain. He released her —and only held her hand. There was silence between them; long, happy silence.

He was the first to speak again. 'How can I go away now?' he said.

She only smiled at that reckless forgetfulness of the promise, by which he had bound himself a few minutes since. 'What did you

tell me,' she asked playfully, 'when you called yourself by hard names, and said you didn't deserve my love?' Her smile vanished softly, and left only a look of tender entreaty in its place. 'Set me an example of firmness, Ovid —don't leave it all to me! Remember what you have made me say. Remember'—she only hesitated for a moment—'remember what an interest I have in you now. I love you, Ovid. Say you will go.'

He said it gratefully. 'My life is yours; my will is yours. Decide for me, and I will begin my journey.'

She was so impressed by her sense of this new responsibility, that she answered him as gravely as if she had been his wife. 'I must give you time to pack up,' she said.

'Say time to be with You!'

She fell into thought. He asked if she was still considering when to send him away. 'No,' she said; 'it isn't that. I was wondering at

myself. What is it that makes a great man like you so fond of me?'

His arm stole round her waist. He could just see her in the darkening twilight under the trees; the murmuring of the leaves was the only sound near them—his kisses lingered on her face. She sighed softly. 'Don't make it too hard for me to send you away!' she whispered. He raised her, and put her arm in his. 'Come,' he said, 'we will walk a little in the cool air.'

They returned to the subject of his departure. It was still early in the week. She inquired if Saturday would be too soon to begin his journey. No: he felt it, too—the longer they delayed, the harder the parting would be.

'Have you thought yet where you will go?' she asked.

'I must begin with a sea-voyage,' he replied. 'Long railway journeys, in my present state, will only do me harm. The

difficulty is where to go to. I have been to America; India is too hot; Australia is too far. Benjulia has suggested Canada.'

As he mentioned the doctor's name, her hand mechanically pressed his arm.

'That strange man!' she said. 'Even his name startles one; I hardly know what to think of him. He seemed to have more feeling for the monkey than for you or me. It was certainly kind of him to take the poor creature home, and try what he could do with it. Are you sure he is a great chemist?'

Ovid stopped. Such a question, from Carmina, sounded strange to him. 'What makes you doubt it?' he said.

'You won't laugh at me, Ovid?'

'You know I won't!'

'Now you shall hear. We knew a famous Italian chemist at Rome—such a nice old man! He and my father used to play piquet; and I looked at them, and tried to learn—and I was

too stupid. But I had plenty of opportunities of noticing our old friend's hands. They were covered with stains; and he caught me looking at them. He was not in the least offended; he told me his experiments had spotted his skin in that way, and nothing would clean off the stains. I saw Doctor Benjulia's great big hands, while he was giving you the brandy—and I remembered afterwards that there were no stains on them. I seem to surprise you.'

'You do indeed surprise me. After knowing Benjulia for years, I have never noticed, what you have discovered on first seeing him.'

'Perhaps he has some way of cleaning the stains off his hands.'

Ovid agreed to this, as the readiest means of dismissing the subject. Carmina had really startled him. Some irrational connection between the great chemist's attention to the

monkey, and the perplexing purity of his hands, persisted in vaguely asserting itself in Ovid's mind. His unacknowledged doubts of Benjulia troubled him as they had never troubled him yet. He turned to Carmina for relief.

'Still thinking, my love?'

'Thinking of you,' she answered. 'I want you to promise me something—and I am afraid to ask it.'

'Afraid? You don't love me, after all!'

'Then I will say it at once! How long do you expect to be away?'

'For two or three months, perhaps.'

'Promise to wait till you return, before you tell your mother——'

'That we are engaged?'

'Yes.'

'You have my promise, Carmina; but you make me uneasy.'

'Why?'

'In my absence, you will be under my mother's care. And you don't like my mother.'

Few words and plain words—and they sorely troubled her.

If she owned that he was right, what would the consequence be? He might refuse to leave her. Even assuming that he controlled himself, he would take his departure harassed by anxieties, which might exercise the worst possible influence over the good effect of the journey. To prevaricate with herself or with him was out of the question. That very evening she had quarrelled with his mother; and she had yet to discover whether Mrs. Gallilee had forgiven her. In her heart of hearts she hated deceit—and in her heart of hearts she longed to set his mind at ease. In that embarrassing position, which was the right way out? Satan persuaded Eve; and Love persuaded Carmina. Love asked if she was cruel enough to make her heart's darling

miserable when he was so fond of her? Before she could realise it, she had begun to deceive him. Poor humanity! poor Carmina!

'You are almost as hard on me as if you were Doctor Benjulia himself!' she said. 'I feel your mother's superiority—and you tell me I don't like her. Haven't you seen how good she has been to me?'

She thought this way of putting it irresistible. Ovid resisted, nevertheless. Carmina plunged into lower depths of deceit immediately.

'Haven't you seen my pretty rooms—my piano—my pictures—my china—my flowers? I should be the most insensible creature living if I didn't feel grateful to your mother.'

'And yet, you are afraid of her.'

She shook his arm impatiently. 'I say, No!'

He was as obstinate as ever. 'I say, Yes! If you're not afraid, why do you wish to

keep our engagement from my mother's knowledge?'

His reasoning was unanswerable. But where is the woman to be found who is not supple enough to slip through the stiff fingers of Reason? She sheltered herself from his logic behind his language.

'Must I remind you again of the time when you were angry?' she rejoined. 'You said your mother was bent on separating us. If I don't want her to know of our engagement just yet—isn't that a good reason?' She rested her head caressingly on his shoulder. 'Tell me,' she went on, thinking of one of Miss Minerva's suggestions, 'doesn't my aunt look to a higher marriage for you than a marriage with me?'

It was impossible to deny that Mrs. Gallilee's views might justify that inquiry. Had she not more than once advised him to wait a few years—in other words, to wait until he

had won the highest honours of his profession—before he thought of marrying at all? But Carmina was too precious to him to be humiliated by comparisons with other women, no matter what their rank might be. He paid her a compliment, instead of giving her an answer.

'My mother can't look higher than you,' he said. 'I wish I could feel sure, Carmina—in leaving you with her—that I am leaving you with a friend whom you trust and love.'

There was a sadness in his tone that grieved her. 'Wait till you come back,' she replied, speaking as gaily as she could. 'You will be ashamed to remember your own misgivings. And don't forget, dear, that I have another friend besides your mother—the best and kindest of friends—to take care of me.'

Ovid heard this with some surprise. 'A friend in my mother's house?' he asked.

'Certainly!'

'Who is it?'

'Miss Minerva.'

'What!' His tone expressed such immeasurable amazement, that Carmina's sense of justice was roused in defence of her new friend.

'If *I* began by wronging Miss Minerva, I had the excuse of being a stranger,' she said, warmly. 'You have known her for years, and you ought to have found out her good qualities long since! Are all men alike, I wonder? Even my kind dear father used to call ugly women the inexcusable mistakes of Nature. Poor Miss Minerva says herself she is ugly, and expects everybody to misjudge her accordingly. I don't misjudge her, for one. Teresa has left me; and you are going away next. A miserable prospect, Ovid, but not quite without hope. Frances—yes, I call her by her Christian name, and she calls me by mine!—Frances will console me, and make my life as happy as it can be till you come back.'

Excepting bad temper, and merciless cultivation of the minds of children, Ovid knew of nothing that justified his prejudice against the governess. Still, Carmina's sudden conversion inspired him with something like alarm. 'I suppose you have good reasons for what you tell me,' he said.

'The best reasons,' she replied, in the most positive manner.

He considered for a moment how he could most delicately inquire what those reasons might be. But valuable opportunities may be lost, even in a moment. 'Will you help me to do justice to Miss Minerva?' he cautiously began.

'Hush!' Carmina interposed. 'Surely, I heard somebody calling to me?'

They paused, and listened. A voice hailed them from the outer side of the garden. They started guiltily. It was the voice of Mrs. Gallilee.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'CARMINA! are you in the Square?'

'Leave it to me,' Ovid whispered. 'We will come to you directly,' he called back.

Mrs. Gallilee was waiting for them at the gate. Ovid spoke, the moment they were within sight of each other. 'You will have no more cause to complain of me,' he said cheerfully; 'I am going away at the end of the week.'

Mrs. Gallilee's answer was addressed to Carmina instead of to her son. 'Thank you, my dear,' she said, and pressed her niece's hand.

It was too dark to see more of faces than their shadowy outline. The learned lady's

tone was the perfection of amiability. She sent Ovid across the road to knock at the house-door, and took Carmina's arm confidentially. 'You little goose!' she whispered, 'how could you suppose I was angry with you? I can't even regret your mistake, you have written such a charming note.'

Ovid was waiting for them in the hall. They went into the library. Mrs. Gallilee enfolded her son in a fervent motherly embrace.

'This completes the enjoyment of a most delightful evening,' she said. 'First a perfect lecture—and then the relief of overpowering anxiety about my son. I suppose your professional studies, Ovid, have never taken you as high as the Interspacial Regions? We were an immense audience to-night, to hear the Professor on that subject, and I really haven't recovered it yet. Fifty miles above us—only fifty miles—there is an atmosphere of cold that would freeze the whole human

family to death in a second of time. Moist matter, in that terrific emptiness, would explode, and become stone; and—listen to this, Carmina—the explosion itself would be frozen, and produce no sound. Think of serious people looking up in that dreadful direction, and talking of going to Heaven. Oh, the insignificance of man, except—I am going to make a joke, Ovid—except when he pleases his old mother by going away for the benefit of his health! And where are you going? Has sensible Carmina advised you? I agree with her beforehand, whatever she has said.'

Ovid informed his mother of Benjulia's suggestion, and asked her what she thought of it.

Mrs. Gallilee's overflowing geniality instantly flooded the absent doctor. He was rude, he was ugly; but what an inestimable friend! what admirable advice! In Ovid's state of health he must not write letters; his

mother would write and thank the doctor, and ask for introductions to local grandees who occupied a position in colonial society. She seized the newspaper: a steamer for Canada sailed from Liverpool on Saturday. Ovid could secure his cabin the next morning ('amidships, my dear, if you can possibly get it'), and could leave London by Friday's train. In her eagerness to facilitate his departure, she proposed to superintend the shutting up of his house, in his absence, and to arrange the disposal of the servants, if he considered it worth while to keep them. She even thought of the cat. The easiest way to provide for the creature would be of course to have her poisoned; but Ovid was so eccentric in some things, that practical suggestions were thrown away on him. 'Sixpence a week for cat's meat isn't much,' cried Mrs. Gallilee in an outburst of generosity. 'We will receive the cat!'

Ovid made his acknowledgments resignedly.

Carmina could see that Mrs. Gallilee's overpowering vitality was beginning to oppress her son.

'I needn't trouble you, mother,' he said. 'My domestic affairs were all settled when I first felt the necessity of getting rest. My manservant travels with me. My housemaid and kitchenmaid will go to their friends in the country; the cook will look after the house; and her nephew, the little page, is almost as fond of the cat as I am. If you will send for a cab, I think I will go home. Like other people in my wretched state, I feel fatigued towards night-time.'

His lips just touched Carmina's delicate little ear, while his mother turned away to ring the bell. 'Expect me to-morrow,' he whispered. 'I love you!—love you!—love you!' He seemed to find the perfection of luxury in the reiteration of those words.

When Ovid had left them, Carmina expected

to hear something of her aunt's discovery in the Square.

Mrs. Gallilee's innocence was impenetrable. Not finding her niece in the house, she had thought of the Square. What could be more natural than that the cousins should take an evening walk, in one of the prettiest enclosures in London? Her anticipation of Ovid's recovery, and her admiration of Carmina's powers of persuasion appeared, for the time, to be the only active ideas in that comprehensive mind. When the servant brought in the tray, with the claret and soda-water, she sent for Miss Minerva to join them, and hear the good news; completely ignoring the interruption of their friendly relations, earlier in the evening. She became festive and facetious at the sight of the soda-water. 'Let us imitate the men, Miss Minerva, and drink a toast before we go to bed. Be cheerful, Carmina, and share half a bottle of soda-water with me. A pleasant

journey to Ovid, and a safe return!' Cheered by the influences of conviviality, the friend of Professors, the tender nurse of half-developed tadpoles, lapsed into learning again. Mrs. Gallilee improvised an appropriate little lecture on Canada—on the botany of the Dominion; on the geology of the Dominion; on the number of gallons of water wasted every hour by the falls of Niagara. 'Science will set it all right, my dears; we shall make that idle water work for us, one of these days. Good-night, Miss Minerva! Dear Carmina, pleasant dreams!'

Safe in the solitude of her bedroom, the governess ominously knitted her heavy eyebrows.

'In all my experience,' she thought, 'I never saw Mrs. Gallilee in such spirits before. What mischief is she meditating, when she has got rid of her son?'

CHAPTER XIX.

THE lapse of a few hours exercised no deteriorating influence on Mrs. Gallilee's amiability.

On the next day, thanks to his mother's interference, Ovid was left in undisturbed enjoyment of Carmina's society. Not only Miss Minerva, but even Mr. Gallilee and the children, were kept out of the way with a delicately-exercised dexterity, which defied the readiest suspicion to take offence. In one word, all that sympathy and indulgence could do to invite Ovid's confidence, was unobtrusively and modestly done. Never had the mistress of domestic diplomacy reached her ends with finer art.

In the afternoon, a messenger delivered

Benjulia's reply to Mrs. Gallilee's announcement of her son's contemplated journey—despatched by the morning's post. The doctor was confined to the house by an attack of gout. If Ovid wanted information on the subject of Canada, Ovid must go to him, and get it. That was all.

'Have you ever been to Doctor Benjulia's house?' Carmina asked.

'Never.'

'Then all you have told me about him is mere report? Now you will find out the truth! Of course you will go?'

Ovid felt no desire to make a voyage of exploration to Benjulia's house—and said so plainly. Carmina used all her powers of persuasion to induce him to change his mind. Mrs. Gallilee (superior to the influence of girlish curiosity) felt the importance of obtaining introductions to Canadian society, and agreed with her niece. 'I shall order the carriage,' she said,

assuming a playfully despotic tone; 'and, if you don't go to the doctor—Carmina and I will pay him a visit in your place.'

Threatened, if he remained obstinate, with such a result as this, Ovid had no alternative but to submit.

The one order that could be given to the coachman was to drive to the village of Hendon, on the north-western side of London, and to rust to inquiries for the rest of the way. Between Hendon and Willesden, there are pastoral solitudes within an hour's drive of Oxford Street —wooded lanes and wild-flowers, farms and cornfields, still unprofaned by the devastating brickwork of the builder of modern times. Following winding ways, under shadowing trees, the coachman made his last inquiry at a road-side public-house. Hearing that Benjulia's place of abode was now within half a mile of him, Ovid set forth on foot; leaving the driver and the horses to take their ease at their inn.

He arrived at an iron gate, opening out of a lonely lane.

There, in the middle of a barren little field, he saw Benjulia's house—a hideous square building of yellow brick, with a slate roof. A low wall surrounded the place, having another iron gate at the entrance. The enclosure within was as barren as the field without: not even an attempt at flower-garden or kitchen-garden was visible. At a distance of some two hundred yards from the house stood a second and smaller building, with a skylight in the roof, which Ovid recognised (from description) as the famous laboratory. Behind it was the hedge which parted Benjulia's morsel of land from the land of his neighbour. Here, the trees rose again, and the fields beyond were cultivated. No dwellings, and no living creatures appeared. So near to London—and yet, in its loneliness, so far away—there was something unnatural in the solitude of the place.

Led by a feeling of curiosity, which was fast degenerating into suspicion, Ovid approached the laboratory, without showing himself in front of the house. No watch-dog barked; no servant appeared on the look-out for a visitor. He was ashamed of himself as he did it, but (so strongly had he been impressed by Carmina's observation of the doctor) he even tried the locked door of the laboratory, and waited and listened! It was a breezy summer-day; the leaves of the trees near him rustled cheerfully. Was there another sound audible? Yes—low and faint, there rose through the sweet woodland melody a moaning cry. It paused; it was repeated; it stopped. He looked round him, not quite sure whether the sound proceeded from the outside or the inside of the building. He shook the door. Nothing happened. The suffering creature (if it *was* a suffering creature) was silent or dead. Had chemical experiment accidentally injured some living thing? Or——?

He recoiled from pursuing that second inquiry. The laboratory had, by this time, become an object of horror to him. He returned to the dwelling-house.

He put his hand on the latch of the gate, and looked back at the laboratory. He hesitated.

That moaning cry, so piteous and so short-lived, haunted his ears. The idea of approaching Benjulia became repellent to him. What he might afterwards think of himself—what his mother and Carmina might think of him—if he returned without having entered the doctor's house, were considerations which had no influence over his mind, in its present mood. The impulse of the moment was the one power that swayed him. He put the latch back in the socket. 'I won't go in,' he said to himself.

It was too late. As he turned from the house a manservant appeared at the door—

crossed the enclosure—and threw the gate open for Ovid, without uttering a word.

They entered the passage. The speechless manservant opened a door on the right, and made a bow, inviting the visitor to enter. Ovid found himself in a room as barren as the field outside. There were the plastered walls, there was the bare floor, left exactly as the builders had left them when the house was finished. After a short absence, the man appeared again. He might be depressed in spirits, or crabbed in temper: the fact remained that, even now, he had nothing to say. He opened a door on the opposite side of the passage—made another bow—and vanished.

'Don't come near me!' cried Benjulia, the moment Ovid showed himself.

The doctor was seated in an inner corner of the room; robed in a long black dressing-gown, buttoned round his throat, which hid every part of him below his fleshless face,

except his big hands, and his tortured gouty foot. Rage and pain glared in his gloomy gray eyes, and shook his clenched fists, resting on the arms of an easy chair. 'Ten thousand red-hot devils are boring ten thousand holes through my foot,' he said. 'If you touch the pillow on my stool, I shall fly at your throat.' He poured some cooling lotion from a bottle into a small watering-pot, and irrigated his foot as if it had been a bed of flowers. By way of further relief to the pain, he swore ferociously; addressing his oaths to himself, in thunderous undertones which made the glasses ring on the sideboard.

Relieved, in his present frame of mind, to have escaped the necessity of shaking hands, Ovid took a chair, and looked about him. Even here he discovered but little furniture, and that little of the heavy old-fashioned sort. Besides the sideboard, he perceived a dining-table, six chairs, and a dingy brown carpet.

There were no curtains on the window, and no pictures or prints on the drab-coloured walls. The empty grate showed its bleak black cavity undisguised; and the mantelpiece had nothing on it but the doctor's dirty and strong-smelling pipe. Benjulia set down his watering-pot, as a sign that the paroxysm of pain had passed away. 'A dull place to live in, isn't it?' In those words he welcomed the visitor to his house.

Irritated by the accident which had forced him into the repellent presence of Benjulia, Ovid answered in a tone which matched the doctor on his own hard ground.

'It's your own fault if the place is dull. Why haven't you planted trees, and laid out a garden?'

'I dare say I shall surprise you,' Benjulia quietly rejoined; 'but I have a habit of speaking my mind. I don't object to a dull place; and I don't care about trees and gardens.'

'You don't seem to care about furniture either,' said Ovid.

Now that he was out of pain for awhile, the doctor's innate insensibility to what other people might think of him, or might say to him, resumed its customary torpor in its own strangely unconscious way. He seemed only to understand that Ovid's curiosity was in search of information about trifles. Well, there would be less trouble in giving him his information, than in investigating his motives. So Benjulia talked of his furniture.

'I dare say you're right,' he said. 'My sister-in-law—did you know I had a relation of that sort?—my sister-in-law got the tables and chairs, and beds and basins. Buying things at shops doesn't interest me. I gave her a cheque; and I told her to furnish a room for me to eat in, and a room for me to sleep in—and not to forget the kitchen and the garrets for the servants. What more do I want?

His intolerable composure only added to his guest's irritability.

'A selfish way of putting it,' Ovid broke out. 'Have you nobody to think of but yourself?'

'Nobody—I am happy to say.'

'That's downright cynicism, Benjulia!'

The doctor reflected. 'Is it?' he said. 'Perhaps you may be right again. I think it's only indifference, myself. Curiously enough my brother looks at it from your point of view—he even used the same word that you used just now. I suppose he found my cynicism beyond the reach of reform. At any rate, he left off coming here. I got rid of *him* on easy terms. What do you say? That inhuman way of talking is unworthy of me? Really I don't think so. I'm not a downright savage. It's only indifference.'

'Does your brother return your indifference? You must be a nice pair, if he does!'

Benjulia seemed to find a certain dreary amusement in considering the question that Ovid had proposed. He decided on doing justice to his absent relative.

'My brother's intelligence is perhaps equal to such a small effort as you suggest,' he said. 'He has just brains enough to keep himself ou of an asylum for idiots. Shall I tell you what he is in two words? A stupid sensualist—that's what he is. I let his wife come here sometimes, and cry. It doesn't trouble *me*; and it seems to relieve *her*. More of my indifference —eh? Well, I don't know. I gave her the change out of the furniture-cheque, to buy a new bonnet with. You might call that indifference, and you might be right once more. I don't care about money. Will you have a drink? You see I can't move. Please ring for the man.'

Ovid refused the drink, and changed the subject. 'Your servant is a remarkably silent person,' he said.

'That's his merit,' Benjulia answered; 'the women-servants have quarrelled with every other man I've had. They can't quarrel with this man. I have raised his wages in grateful acknowledgment of his usefulness to me. I hate noise.'

'Is that the reason why you don't keep a watch-dog?'

'I don't like dogs. They bark.'

He had apparently some other disagreeable association with dogs, which he was not disposed to communicate. His hollow eyes stared gloomily into vacancy. Ovid's presence in the room seemed to have become, for the time being, an impression erased from his mind. He recovered himself, with the customary vehement rubbing of his head, and turned the talk to the object of Ovid's visit.

'So you have taken my advice,' he said. 'You're going to Canada, and you want to get at what I can tell you before you start. Here's

my journal. It will jog my memory, and help us both.'

His writing materials were placed on a movable table, screwed to his chair. Near them lay a shabby-looking book, guarded by a lock. Ten minutes after he had opened his journal, and had looked here and there through the pages, his hard intellect had grasped all that it required. Steadily and copiously his mind emptied its information into Ovid's mind; without a single digression from beginning to end, and with the most mercilessly direct reference to the traveller's practical wants. Not a word escaped him, relating to national character or to the beauties of Nature. Mrs. Gallilee had criticised the Falls of Niagara as a reservoir of wasted power. Doctor Benjulia's scientific superiority over the woman asserted itself with magnificent ease. Niagara being nothing but useless water, he never mentioned Niagara at all.

'Have I served your purpose as a guide?' he asked. 'Never mind thanking me. Yes or no will do. Very good. I have got a line of writing to give you next.' He mended his quill pen, and made an observation. 'Have you ever noticed that women have one pleasure which lasts to the end of their lives?' he said. 'Young and old, they have the same inexhaustible enjoyment of society; and, young and old, they are all alike incapable of understanding a man, when he says he doesn't care to go to a party. Even your clever mother thinks you want to go to parties in Canada.' He tried his pen, and found it would do—and began his letter.

Seeing his hands at work, Ovid was again reminded of Carmina's discovery. His eyes wandered a little aside, towards the corner formed by the pillar of the chimney-piece and the wall of the room. The big bamboo-stick rested there. A handle was attached to it,

made of light-coloured horn, and on that handle there were some stains. Ovid looked at them with a surgeon's practised eye. They were dry stains of blood. (Had he washed his hands on the last occasion when he used his stick? And had he forgotten that the handle wanted washing too?)

Benjulia finished his letter, and wrote the address. He took up the envelope, to give it to Ovid—and stopped, as if some doubt tempted him to change his mind. The hesitation was only momentary. He persisted in his first intention, and gave Ovid the letter. It was addressed to a doctor at Montreal.

'That man won't introduce you to society,' Benjulia announced, 'and won't worry your brains with medical talk. Keep off one subject on your side. A mad bull is nothing to my friend if you speak of Vivisection.'

Ovid looked at him steadily, when he

uttered the last word. Benjulia looked back, just as steadily at Ovid.

At the moment of that reciprocal scrutiny, did the two men suspect each other? Ovid, on his side, determined not to leave the house without putting his suspicions to the test.

'I thank you for the letter,' he began; 'and I will not forget the warning.'

The doctor's capacity for the exercise of the social virtues had its limits. His reserves of hospitality were by this time near their end.

'Is there anything more I can do for you?' he interposed.

'You can answer a simple question,' Ovid replied. 'My cousin Carmina——'

Benjulia interrupted him again: 'Don't you think we said enough about your cousin in the Gardens?' he suggested.

Ovid acknowledged the hint with a neatness of retort almost worthy of his mother. 'You have your own merciful disposition to blame,

if I return to the subject,' he replied. 'My cousin cannot forget your kindness to the monkey.'

'The sooner she forgets my kindness the better. The monkey is dead.'

'I am glad to hear it.'

'Why?'

'I thought the creature was living in pain.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that I heard a moaning——'

'Where?'

'In the building behind your house.'

'You heard the wind in the trees.'

'Nothing of the sort. Are your chemical experiments ever made on animals?'

The doctor parried that direct attack, without giving ground by so much as a hair's breadth.

'What did I say when I gave you your letter of introduction?' he asked. 'I said, A mad bull is nothing to my friend, if you speak

to him of Vivisection. Now I have something more to tell you. I am like my friend.' He waited a little. 'Will that do?' he asked.

'Yes,' said Ovid; 'that will do.'

They were as near to an open quarrel as two men could be: Ovid took up his hat to go. Even at that critical moment, Benjulia's strange jealousy of his young colleague—as a possible rival in some field of discovery which he claimed as his own—showed itself once more. There was no change in his tone; he still spoke like a judicious friend.

'A last word of advice,' he said. 'You are travelling for your health; don't let inquisitive strangers lead you into talk. Some of them might be physiologists.'

'And might suggest new ideas,' Ovid rejoined, determined to make him speak out this time

Benjulia nodded, in perfect agreement with his guest's view.

'Are you afraid of new ideas?' Ovid went on.

'Perhaps I am—in *your* head.' He made that admission, without hesitation or embarrassment. 'Good-bye!' he resumed. 'My sensitive foot feels noises: don't bang the door.'

Getting out into the lane again, Ovid looked at his letter to the doctor at Montreal. His first impulse was to destroy it.

As Benjulia had hesitated before giving him the letter, so he now hesitated before tearing it up.

Contrary to the usual practice in such cases, the envelope was closed. Under those circumstances, Ovid's pride decided him on using the introduction. Time was still to pass, before events opened his eyes to the importance of his decision. To the end of his life he remembered that Benjulia had been near to keeping back the letter, and that he had been near to tearing it up.

CHAPTER XX.

THE wise ancient who asserted that 'Time flies,' must have made that remarkable discovery while he was in a state of preparation for a journey. When are we most acutely sensible of the shortness of life? When do we consult our watches in perpetual dread of the result? When does the night steal on us unawares, and the morning take us by surprise? When we are going on a journey.

The remaining days of the week went by with a rush. Ovid had hardly time to ask himself if Friday had really come, before the hours of his life at home were already numbered.

He had still a little time to spare when he

presented himself at Fairfield Gardens late in the afternoon. Finding no one in the library, he went up to the drawing-room. His mother was alone, reading.

'Have you anything to say to me, before I tell Carmina that you are here?' Mrs. Gallilee put that question quietly, so far as her voice was concerned. But she still kept her eyes on her book. Ovid knew that she was offering him his first and last chance of speaking plainly, before he went away. In Carmina's interests he spoke.

'Mother,' he said, 'I am leaving the one person in the world who is most precious to me, under your care.'

'Do you mean,' Mrs. Gallilee asked, 'that you and Carmina are engaged to be married?'

'I mean that; and I am not sure that you approve of the engagement. Will you be plainer with me than you were on the last occasion when we spoke on this subject?'

'When was that?' Mrs. Gallilee inquired.

'When you and I were alone for a few minutes, on the morning when I breakfasted here. You said it was quite natural that Carmina should have attracted me; but you were careful not to encourage the idea of a marriage between us. I understood that you disapproved of it—but you didn't plainly tell me why.'

'Can women always give their reason?'

'Yes—when they are women like you.'

'Thank you, my dear, for a pretty compliment. I can trust my memory. I think I hinted at the obvious objections to an engagement. You and Carmina are cousins; and you belong to different religious communities. I may add that a man with your brilliant prospects has, in my opinion, no reason to marry unless his wife is in a position to increase his influence and celebrity. I had looked forward to seeing my clever son rise more

nearly to a level with persons of rank, who are members of our family. There is my confession, Ovid. If I did hesitate on the occasion to which you have referred, I have now, I think, told you why.'

'Am I to understand that you hesitate still?' Ovid asked.

'No.' With that brief reply she rose to put away her book.

Ovid followed her to the bookcase. 'Has Carmina conquered you?' he said.

She put her book back in its place. 'Carmina has conquered me,' she answered.

'You say it coldly.'

'What does that matter, if I say it truly?'

The struggle in him between hope and fear burst its way out. 'Oh, mother, no words can tell you how fond I am of Carmina! For God's sake take care of her, and be kind to her!'

'For *your* sake,' said Mrs. Gallilee, gently

correcting the language of her excitable son, from her own protoplastic point of view. 'You do me an injustice if you feel anxious about Carmina, when you leave her here. My dead brother's child, is *my* child. You may be sure of that.' She took his hand, and drew him to her, and kissed his forehead with dignity and deliberation. If Mr. Mool had been present, during the registration of that solemn pledge, he would have been irresistibly reminded of the other ceremony, which is called signing a deed.

'Have you any instructions to give me?' Mrs. Gallilee proceeded. 'For instance, do you object to my taking Carmina to parties? I mean, of course, parties which will improve her mind.'

He fell sadly below his mother's level in replying to this. 'Do everything you can to make her life happy while I am away.' Those were his only instructions.

But Mrs. Gallilee had not done with him yet. 'With regard to visitors,' she went on, 'I presume you wish me to be careful, if I find young men calling here oftener than usual?'

Ovid actually laughed at this. 'Do you think I doubt her?' he asked. 'The earth doesn't hold a truer girl than my little Carmina!' A thought struck him while he said it. The brightness faded out of his face; his voice lost its gaiety. 'There is one person who may call on you,' he said, 'whom I don't wish her to see.'

'Who is he?'

'Unfortunately, he is a man who has excited her curiosity. I mean Benjulia.'

It was now Mrs. Gallilee's turn to be amused. Her laugh was not one of her foremost fascinations. It was hard in tone, and limited in range—it opened her mouth, but it failed to kindle any light in her eyes.

'Jealous of the ugly doctor!' she exclaimed. 'Oh, Ovid, what next?'

'You never made a greater mistake in your life,' her son answered sharply.

'Then what is the objection to him?' Mrs. Gallilee rejoined.

It was not easy to meet that question with a plain reply. If Ovid asserted that Benjulia's chemical experiments were assumed—for some reason known only to himself—as a cloak to cover the atrocities of the Savage Science, he would only raise the doctor in his mother's estimation. If, on the other hand, he described what had passed between them when they met in the Zoological Gardens, Mrs. Gallilee might summon Benjulia to explain the slur which he had indirectly cast on the memory of Carmina's mother—and might find, in the reply, some plausible reason for objecting to her son's marriage. Having rashly placed himself in this dilemma, Ovid unwisely escaped

from it by the easiest way. 'I don't think Benjulia a fit person,' he said, 'to be in the company of a young girl.'

Mrs. Gallilee accepted this expression of opinion with a readiness, which would have told a more suspicious man that he had made a mistake. Ovid had roused the curiosity—perhaps awakened the distrust—of his clever mother.

'You know best,' Mrs. Gallilee replied; 'I will bear in mind what you say.' She rang the bell for Carmina, and left the room. Ovid found the minutes passing slowly, for the first time since the day had been fixed for his departure. He attributed this impression to his natural impatience for the appearance of his cousin—until the plain evidence of the clock pointed to a delay of five endless minutes, and more. As he approached the door to make inquiries, it opened at last. Hurrying to meet Carmina, he found himself face to face with Miss Minerva!

She came in hastily, and held out her hand without looking at him.

'Forgive me for intruding on you,' she said, with a rapidity of utterance and a timidity of manner strangely unlike herself. 'I'm obliged to prepare the children's lessons for to-morrow; and this is my only opportunity of bidding you good-bye. You have my best wishes—my heartfelt wishes—for your safety and your health, and—and your enjoyment of the journey. Good-bye! good-bye!'

After holding his hand for a moment, she hastened back to the door. There she stopped, turned towards him again, and looked at him for the first time. 'I have one thing more to say,' she broke out. 'I will do all I can to make Carmina's life pleasant in your absence.' Before he could thank her, she was gone.

In another minute Carmina came in, and found Ovid looking perplexed and annoyed,

She had passed Frances on the stairs—had there been any misunderstanding between Ovid and the governess?

'Have you seen Miss Minerva?' she asked.

He put his arm round her, and seated her by him on the sofa. 'I don't understand Miss Minerva,' he said. 'How is it that she came here, when I was expecting You?'

'She asked me, as a favour, to let her see you first; and she seemed to be so anxious about it that I gave way. I didn't do wrong, Ovid—did I?'

'My darling, you are always kind, and always right! But why couldn't she say good-bye (with the others) downstairs? Do *you* understand this curious woman?'

'I think I do.' She paused, and toyed with the hair over Ovid's forehead. 'Miss Minerva is fond of you, poor thing,' she said innocently.

'Fond of me?'

The surprise which his tone expressed, failed to attract her attention. She quietly varied the phrase that she had just used.

'Miss Minerva has a true regard for you—and knows that you don't return it,' she explained, still playing with Ovid's hair. 'I want to see how it looks,' she went on, 'when it's parted in the middle. No! it looks better as you always wear it. How handsome you are, Ovid! Don't you wish I was beautiful, too? Everybody in the house loves you; and everybody is sorry you are going away. I like Miss Minerva, I like everybody, for being so fond of my dear, dear hero. Oh, what shall I do when day after day passes, and only takes you farther and farther away from me? No! I won't cry. You shan't go away with a heavy heart, my dear one, if I can help it. Where is your photograph? You promised me your photograph. Let me look at it. Yes! it's like you, and yet not like

you. It will do to think over, when I am alone. My love, it has copied your eyes, but it has not copied the divine kindness and goodness that I see in them!' She paused, and laid her head on his bosom. 'I shall cry, in spite of my resolution, if I look at you any longer. We won't look—we won't talk—I can feel your arm round me—I can hear your heart. Silence is best. I have been told of people dying happily; and I never understood it before. I think I could die happily now.' She put her hand over his lips before he could reprove her, and nestled closer to him. 'Hush!' she said softly; 'hush!'

They neither moved nor spoke: that silent happiness was the best happiness, while it lasted. Mrs. Gallilee broke the charm. She suddenly opened the door, pointed to the clock, and went away again.

The cruel time had come. They made their last promises; shared their last kisses;

held each other in the last embrace. She threw herself on the sofa, as he left her—with a gesture which entreated him to go, while she could still control herself. Once, he looked round, when he reached the door—and then it was over.

Alone on the landing, he dashed the tears away from his eyes. Suffering and sorrow tried hard to get the better of his manhood: they had shaken, but had not conquered him. He was calm, when he joined the members of the family, waiting in the library.

Perpetually setting an example, Mrs. Gallilee ascended her domestic pedestal as usual. She favoured her son with one more kiss, and reminded him of the railway. 'We understand each other, Ovid—you have only five minutes to spare. Write, when you get to Quebec. Now, Maria! say good-bye.'

Maria presented herself to her brother with a grace which did honour to the family danc-

ing-master. Her short farewell speech was a model of its kind.

'Dear Ovid, I am only a child; but I feel truly anxious for the recovery of your health. At this favourable season you may look forward to a pleasant voyage. Please accept my best wishes.' She offered her cheek to be kissed—and looked like a young person who had done her duty, and knew it.

Mr. Gallilee—modestly secluded behind the window curtains—appeared, at a sign from hi wife. One of his plump red hands held a bundle of cigars. The other clutched an enormous new travelling-flask—the giant of its tribe.

'My dear boy, it's possible there may be good brandy and cigars on board; but that's not my experience of steamers—is it yours?' He stopped to consult his wife. 'My dear, is it yours?' Mrs. Gallilee held up the 'Railway Guide,' and shook it significantly. Mr. Gallilee

went on in a hurry. 'There's some of the right stuff in this flask, Ovid, if you will accept it. Five-and-forty years old—would you like to taste it? Would *you* like to taste it, my dear?' Mrs. Gallilee seized the 'Railway Guide' again, with a terrible look. Her husband crammed the big flask into one of Ovid's pockets, and the cigars into the other. 'You'll find them a comfort when you're away from us. God bless you, my son! You don't mind my calling you my son? I couldn't be fonder of you, if I really was your father. Let's part as cheerfully as we can,' said poor Mr. Gallilee, with the tears rolling undisguisedly over his fat cheeks. 'We can write to each other—can't we? Oh dear! dear! I wish I could take it as easy as Maria does. Zo! come and give him a kiss, poor fellow. Where's Zo?'

Mrs. Gallilee made the discovery—she dragged Zo into view, from under the table.

Ovid took his little sister on his knee, and asked why she had hidden herself.

'Because I don't want to say good-bye!' cried the child, giving her reason with a passionate outbreak of sorrow that shook her from head to foot. 'Take me with you, Ovid, take me with you!' He did his best to console her, under adverse circumstances. Mrs. Gallilee's warning voice sounded like a knell—'Time! time!' Zo's shrill treble rang out louder still. Zo was determined to write to Ovid, if she was not allowed to go with him. 'Pa's going to write to you—why shouldn't I?' she screamed through her tears. 'Dear Zoe, you are too young,' Maria remarked. 'Damned nonsense!' sobbed Mr. Gallilee; 'she *shall* write!' 'Time, time!' Mrs. Gallilee reiterated. Taking no part in the dispute, Ovid directed two envelopes for Zo, and quieted her in that way. He hurried into the hall; he glanced at the stairs that led to the drawing-room.

Carmina was on the landing, waiting for a farewell look at him. On the higher flight of stairs, invisible from the hall, Miss Minerva was watching the scene of departure. Reckless of railways and steamers, Ovid ran up to Carmina. Another and another kiss; and then away to the house-door, with Zo at his heels, trying to get into the cab with him. A last kind word to the child, as they carried her back to the house; a last look at the familiar faces in the doorway; a last effort to resist that foretaste of death which embitters all human partings—and Ovid was gone!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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